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LIFE OF WILBERFORCE.

THE

LIFE

OF

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WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

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BY HIS SONS,

ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE, M. A.

VICAR OF EAST FARLEIGH, LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE;

AND

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, M. A.

RECTOR OF BRIGHSTONE.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

Happy is the state
In which ye, father, here do dwell at ease,
Leading a life so free and fortunate
From all the tempests of these worldly seas.
SPENCER.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII.

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JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.

THE

LIFE OF WILBERFORCE.

CHAPTER XVII.

JANUARY 1801 TO DECEMBER 1802.

Change of Ministers—Distress of the poor—King's recovery—Letter to Pitt—Peace made—Yoxall Lodge—Bath—Guarantee of Turkey prevented—Pitt's support of Addington—His own feelings—Contemplates a general convention for Abolition—Letter to Addington—Opposes settlement of Trinidad lands by newly imported negroes—Abolition motion delayed—Dissolution of parliament—Unanimously chosen a fourth time member for Yorkshire—Speech—Broomfield—Private reflections—Society—Parliament meets—Speech against foreign connexions.

THE opening of the nineteenth century was dark and threatening. "What tempests," says the Journal of January, 1801, "rage around, and how are we urged to seek for that peaceful haven, which alone can insure real security and happiness!"

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

"Near London, Feb. 7, 1801.

"My dear Muncaster,

I have strange tidings to communicate. The King and his Cabinet have quarrelled concerning the emancipation (as it is called) of the Irish Roman Catholics,—and Pitt, Dundas, Lord Grenville, Windham, and probably Lord Spencer also, and Lord Camden, are to go out of office. I think you will guess who is to succeed—the Speaker, with Pitt's friendly concurrence. Grant is to be Attorney-General[1]—the main pillar, Hawkesbury, Secretary of State—Mitford, Speaker—and of the younger or inferior, as many continue as Mr. Pitt can prevail to stay in. He has acted most magnanimously and patriotically.

"The Speaker, we know, is a man of talents and integrity, and of generous feelings, but not qualified for such rough and rude work as he may have to encounter, but if peace be made the government may last.

"I am so pressed for time to-day, that I cannot write fully; but I could not leave you uninformed on a point of such importance. It is strange, and certainly argues great precipitancy and want of foresight, that this was not settled one way or other last year when the Union took place, or at least agreed on so far as to preclude all difference at St. James's. These particulars are not yet known, so do not talk of them un-

[1] Sir Edward Law, afterwards Lord Ellenborough, was made Attorney-General; Sir William Grant continuing to be Solicitor-General.

less they are come out otherwise. But I fear the deed is done. The King and Pitt part on affectionate terms. The King saying, that it is a struggle between duty and affection, in which duty carries it. I am vexed that some of the Cabinet whom I least *affect* are to continue. But it is so uncertain whether you will not have left Muncaster before this reaches you, that I am the rather disposed to break off.

Yours ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

It was well understood that more pacific counsels were to be expected from the new administration, and many of his friends hoped therefore that Mr. Wilberforce would be included in its number. He himself just felt the influence of the eddy which was sweeping by him. "I am too much for a Christian, yet not greatly, intruded on by earthly things, in consequence of these late political changes, and all the considerations which they call forth. I was for a little intoxicated, and had risings of ambition. Blessed be God for this day of rest and religious occupation, wherein earthly things assume their true size and comparative insignificance; ambition is stunted, and I hope my affections in some degree rise to things above."[2] His views upon the Slave Trade differed too decidedly from those of the new Cabinet to allow him to take office with them, and he continued therefore with unbroken cheerfulness his independent labours. His

[2] Journal, Sunday, Feb. 8.

great present object was to relieve that distress, which the failure of the harvest, and the continuance of the war, had produced in the manufacturing districts. "Indifferent health alone prevented" him "from going down into the West Riding, to ascertain facts" for himself;[3] and his private aid was given so liberally, that he speaks of having "spent this year almost £3000 more than his income;"[4] and as "thinking in consequence of giving up his villa for a few seasons."[5] "I should thus save £400 or £500 per annum, which I could give to the poor. Yet to give up the means of receiving friends there, where by attending family prayers, and in other ways, an impression may be made upon them, seems a great concession. And with Broomfield I can by management give away at least one-fourth of my income. O Lord, guide me right. But there or wherever else I am, O Lord, do Thou grant me Thy Holy Spirit to fill me with every Christian grace; love, joy, peace, long-suffering."[6]

From Palace Yard, he writes in February to Mr. Hey.

"House of Commons, Feb. 25.

"My dear Sir,

I have been sending a supply of money to a few friends, in different parts of the manufacturing

[3] To William Hey Esq. Jan. 21.

[4] "Of the above large sum," is his remark at the close of the year's account-book, "much not recurring expenses, and charity much increased by the distress of the times." The sum of £3173 is accounted for as bestowed during this year in charity.

[5] Diary, Jan. 21, 1802. [6] Journal, Sunday, Feb. 28, 1802.

districts of the West Riding, conceiving that in these times of extreme pressure, though an individual purse could do but little, yet that it might effect something; and that it was well to enable the clergy to be active and assiduous in the relief of the general distress. I have sent to Mr. Powley and Mr. Kilvington; they, I think, will relieve their own country poor. I sent a trifle to Mr. Miles Atkinson, but I have thought that Leeds would be likely to fare better than almost any country place, from the number of affluent residents, and therefore that I had better direct my little stream towards a different spot. I have heard however that Pudsey and its neighbourhood are in extreme distress, and that scarcely any merchants or gentlemen live in that parish. I have therefore resolved to beg you to apply any sum not exceeding £50 for their relief. I cannot get any bill to-day, but I will send you one shortly.

"What is to be done? I own I think that government should relieve, privately, some of the most distressed of the poor districts, afterwards alleging that they did not do so publicly for fear of producing a mischievous effect abroad. I must break off.

Yours very sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Some such measure he continued earnestly to press, deeming it "hard to call on the land alone to pay for the subsistence of the manufacturers, if they should be thrown out of employment for some months by the

continuance of hostilities."[7] "Much busied about the manufacturers in the West Riding. The committee about the poor makes no progress. People hard-hearted in general."[8] "Addington wavering about plan, and not for giving public money."[9] "Our dear and benevolent friend," writes Dr. Milner[10] from Palace Yard, "absolutely exhausts his strength on this subject. He is the most feeling soul I ever knew; and also the most patient and indefatigable in endeavouring to lessen the miseries of the people: and how he does get misrepresented and abused! But you may kick him as long and as much as you please; if he could but fill the bellies of the poor, he would willingly submit to it all." "I find more persons approving my idea about the poor. I am nearly resolved to move for a million for their relief."[11] "Poor relief put off most shabbily till after Easter—sad work—whilst we hear of increasing distress, and even tumult and insurrection. Much hurt by the coldness and dilatoriness of government."[12] "At last, got measure through of allowing parishes to borrow on their rates."[13] "Doubtful what course to pursue, for want of support, except to the plan of lending to the parishes, which I abhor."[14]

Throughout this spring his Diary contains many interesting notices of passing events. "Feb. 23rd. Heard in the House of the King's being ill in the old

[7] To William Hey Esq. April 7.
[8] Diary, March 19.
[9] Diary, March 10.
[10] To William Hey Esq. March 18.
[11] Diary, March 31.
[12] Ib. April 1.
[13] Ib. March 20.
[14] Ib. April 20.

way from Thursday evening; yet next evening so well as to attend council." The King's agitation at being urged to grant power to the Romanists, was not unlikely to expose him to such an attack. "At the Levee, on Wednesday the 28th of January, the King said to Dundas, 'What is this that this young Lord has brought over, which they are going to throw at my head?' . . . Lord C. came over with the plan in September . . . 'I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such measure. The most Jacobinical thing I ever heard of.' 'You'll find,' said Dundas, among those who are friendly to that measure, some you never supposed your enemies.'"[15] "Colour of tidings from Prussia unpromising. Feb. 24th. Pitt's—reading the correspondence. 27th. House suddenly up from Nichols's absurdity and Pitt's extreme eloquence—too much partaking of stage effect; but Pitt sincerely affected. 28th. To Buckingham House, to inquire after the King, who better. To Addington's for an hour, about the mode of relieving the poor, and the King's state: highly pleasing account.

"Saturday, March 7th. To Speaker's Levee—changed to Saturday night. Shows the good of all such attempts—carried only half way at first. Much talk there, and home late. The King gradually getting better—very calm and resigned, on religious grounds. King of Prussia requiring us to resign Danish and Swedish ships, and resolved to assert by force armed neutrality. Lord St. Vincent talks openly that we must have

[15] Diary.

peace. 12th. House—martial law in Ireland. Irish members spoke well — Lee — French — Fitzgerald. 13th. House—Poor Bill. Addington's, who has been ill of rheumatic fever. ' Fleet sailed for North Seas yesterday. Alas, the pride of man! how boastful we are! 17th. Dundas well deserves his pension, though at first honestly refused it. The King recommended a nobleman for office—Dundas refused, saying, 'none but who fit could be placed in those offices;' and now trying hard to persuade Charles Grant to go to India. Highly disinterested. 20th. Heard from Leeds of intended insurrection, and went to Addington. The King complaining that government not spirited enough. Forced by suspension of Habeas Corpus Act expiring, to let out some dangerous men. Debate on Lord Darnley's motion for a committee on the state of the nation—Lord Westmoreland coarse but able—Auckland ruining himself by over-refinement. How strikingly cunning men defeat themselves! Marquis of Buckingham in opposition. The new government fairly and honestly bent on peace. 22nd. With Addington by his desire for an hour or more—long talk—poor, and other subjects. 25th. Grey's motion on state of nation—Pitt and Fox—former excellent. Addington's first appearance as minister—took his seat, Monday. A set of dinners for Pitt—declined them all. Heard of swearing in against the constitution in West Riding —conferred with Yorke and Mulgrave—received a copy of the oath. The clouds blacken around—no thoughts of God.

"April 15th. We hear of the Emperor of Russia's death by apoplexy—supposed violence; and of the astonishing success of our attack on the lines of defence off Copenhagen. 19th. Nelson's generosity and humanity justly praised. Dined early, refusing Russia company, because of its being wrong to exult on victory—rather humble rejoicing. 17th. Saw Lord Eldon, and long talk with him on the best mode of study and discipline—for the young Grants—to be lawyers." The Chancellor's reply was not encouraging —"I know no rule to give them, but that they must make up their minds to live like a hermit and work like a horse." "Eldon had just received the great seal, and I expressed my fears that they were bringing the King into public too soon after his late indisposition. 'You shall judge for yourself,' he answered, 'from what passed between us when I kissed hands on my appointment. The King had been conversing with me, and when I was about to retire, he said, 'Give my remembrances to Lady Eldon.' I acknowledged his condescension, and intimated that I was ignorant of Lady Eldon's claim to such a notice. 'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I know how much I owe to Lady Eldon; I know that you would have made yourself a country curate, and that she has made you my Lord Chancellor.'"[16]

20th. "No public news. Emperor Paul's death does not seem so decisive for us as was hoped. 28th. Heard to-day of our troops bravely landing in Egypt.

[16] Con. Mem.

May 15th. Heard accounts from Egypt, of the action of the 21st of March. Abercrombie dead of wounds: 240 killed, 924 wounded. All fought most bravely.

"June 12th. Sad foolish work about the motion concerning clergy sitting in parliament. More stir at Cambridge than on any former occasion, about clergy's ineligibility to parliament. First time St. John's and Trinity agreed. The dispute with the northern nations likely to go off well. Friends uneasy about my health—say I am worn and thin; they think too much of this. Alas, I do nothing: it is my grief and burthen that I am so unprofitable. 18th. (14)[17] not giving so much satisfaction in the House of Commons as were to be wished. Awkwardness about Abbot. French official paper speaks with great civility of Addington, as if meaning to gain on him by courtesy, or as meaning to smooth the way to peace.

"July 4th. Our ministers I fear trifling about peace. King going to George Rose at Cuffnell's. Duke of Portland at last out: Addington forced to compel him. 13th. Northern affair made up by Lord St. Helen's, who made a British Peer. Invasion apprehended by government—strange folly not to be better prepared against it. Grain still very high, though falling much. Dundas gone to Scotland. I fear negociation with France gone off, though all kept profoundly secret."

"This persuasion gives me great pain on many accounts. I really see not what benefit we can derive from the war, unless some unexpected turn of affairs

[17] Mr. Pitt.

should take place, on which we have no right to reckon; whilst on the other hand the state of war, like a bad habit of body, exposes us to unforeseen and nameless dangers of the most fatal tendency. There is good reason to believe that the French have been, and indeed still are, meditating an invasion of this country. I have myself been slow to believe it, but am at length almost forced to yield my assent." [18]

"Before our fleet came from the Baltic, this attempt was more seriously in view. A Swiss gentleman just from France, says that the people are full of the invasion of England; grounding hopes on the high price of provisions here, and inadequate wages of labour. No scarcity, but government unable to protect the poor from sharpers. Gala not spirited—Moreau not present—strong indications of bad terms with Buonaparte. Articles dearer than formerly in France. People wish for peace. Country people sulky. No gentry's houses to be seen. Country more cultivated than formerly, but ill to Swiss eye." [19]

TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT.

"Broomfield, Aug. 17, 1801.

"My dear Pitt,

I returned home last night, and though it will be a very great disappointment to me not to see you before my departure, I *must* go immediately to my friend Gisborne's, whom I have long kept waiting for me—

[18] Letter to F. Hare Naylor Esq. July 30. [19] Diary, Aug. 1.

"Amongst other things I wished to have some conversation with you concerning the state of the country, as it bears on the question of peace. You, I am sure, (indeed you have proved it by your conduct,) recognise the extreme importance of government retaining the good-will and confidence of the bulk of the people. I am deeply hurt by the apprehension, which is so strongly pressed upon me that I know not how to deny its solidity, that a rooted disaffection to the constitution and government has made some progress among the lower orders, and even a little higher; and when it is not quite so bad as this, there is often, especially among irreligious men, an abominable spirit of indifference as to our civil and ecclesiastical institutions, instead of that instinctive love and rooted attachment to all that is British, which one used to witness (and this sort of regard, the same as a child has for a father, is injured when it is called, as it is by Burke, a prejudice). I myself have observed a calculating, computing principle, considering what would be gained and what would be lost if there was to be a new order of things; confessing that our government was an old one, and had the vices and defects of age, &c. I assure you, I have heard this, from warm friends of government too, in private; and though whilst things go well, several of those who use it would fight manfully for our constitution and laws, yet when there is any pressure, the mischiefs of such hollow attachment will abundantly show themselves.

"The long scarcity, and the temporary stagnation of trade, with what I shall ever think ill-judged parsimony in not granting a liberal supply out of the public purse, (though I am far from not seeing the magnitude of the evils consequent on such a mode of relief,) have done most harm among the lower orders, and I hope the return of good seasons will in part at least cure the disease; also our naval successes excite and revive the old British spirit in many hearts. But I assure you that in Yorkshire, in the manufacturing parts I mean; in London, and in its neighbourhood, (I only speak of what I know, but I do not see why the same causes, so far as they have operated in other places, should not produce the same effects,) and in parts of Essex, all the lower orders are tainted. I say all this to you, because I have an opportunity of hearing facts which may not fall in your way; you will yourself apply them.

"I own I am disappointed that the negociation should have dragged on so long without coming to a conclusion; and I am much disposed to think, that when government had made up their own minds what it was necessary to our interests and our credit that we should retain, they had better have frankly declared to the French government that thereabouts was the limit they were resolved not to pass. I think they would have gained more in effect, both in France and in England, than they would have lost of what might have been got by treating in detail. Also, I am far from thinking, as some of our friends do, that after

peace shall have been made we may sit down with the same security as after other wars. Still the great question recurs, shall we probably be in a better or a worse situation by persisting in the war, than by making peace on any given terms and in any given circumstances? I will honestly confess to you also, that I am extremely pleased with the new naval system in which Lord Nelson is employed. It comes in connexion, in my mind, with the very point of the continuance of the war, inasmuch as it is a cheap, and I hope with the aid of our navy, effectual offensive instrument of defence. There is something damping and dispiriting in waiting to be invaded; and the very suspense becomes harassing. Whereas this ingenious mode of giving to a war, in its principle defensive, the spirit and energy of offensive operations, just supplies what we want. Yet we must also see that it is what the enemy may avail themselves of, more easily than they can of the activity and esprit de corps, &c. which belong to our seamen.

"I have said enough to suggest to your mind some of the ideas which are uppermost in mine, and you will put them together. I have probably tired you as well as myself. I will only add therefore my earnest wish that you would this summer run over the history of the last nine or ten years, I mean of the French Revolution. There is an account of it in the Encyclopædia Britannica, (the Scotch one, third edition,) and in the supplement;—a publication well worth your having. I should like to know what

you think of this little summary. I have been considering a little how far matters have turned out agreeably, or contrary, to my expectations.

"Another thing. Is Marsh employed on a history of the last twenty years? It is reported he is so engaged; but if not, and he will not, do let some one else undertake the task. There is no publication (except this Encyclopædia, of which I never knew till lately) which gives you the events of the last ten years, except the new Annual Register and others of the same school; and they are more prejudiced accounts than so many of Fox's speeches would be.

"I must break off. Farewell, my dear Pitt, I am not without hopes of catching a glimpse of you in the West of England, if I go to Bath; but I suppose parliament will meet early in November. I had thought of meeting you at Lord Camden's, who had kindly asked me, but I find I must set out immediately northwards. You will be very glad to hear that Ryder mends solidly and rapidly.

Believe me, my dear Pitt,
Yours ever,
W. WILBERFORCE."

Shortly after this letter was written he set out upon a visit to the midland counties. "About ten days ago," he writes to Mr. Bankes in September, "I brought Mrs. Wilberforce and my three children to these my old bachelor quarters in Needwood forest; Gisborne my host. This you may remember is the

forest which we devoted to the axe and the ploughshare a few months ago. I confess I have been not a little provoked to see such extents of miserable hopeless wastes suffered to continue in their present state of unprofitable nakedness, whilst these beautiful retreats are sacrificed. However, if wheat be pulled down one shilling a quarter, it will be a reimbursement."

He was still at Mr. Gisborne's when he "heard" upon the 2nd of October,[20] "from Pitt and Addington, that Lord Hawkesbury and Mr. Otto had signed preliminaries of peace the evening before. Pitt calls them on the whole highly honourable and advantageous, though, in one material respect, different from what might have been wished." Upon the 6th there were "fireworks at the Lodge for the Peace. The children were delighted:" and the next day he "set out most reluctantly from his kind host," on his road to Bath, where by a course of the waters he was to refit for the ensuing session. Here he found a large party of political acquaintance, and as usual had his time little at command.

"Bath, Oct. 12, 1801.

"My dear Gisborne,

* * * * * * * This is a sad place for visitors; and as I cannot think it right to say, through my servant, 'not at home,'[21]

[20] Diary.

[21] He was brought to this conviction by the bluntness of a faithful north-country servant, to whom he had carefully, and as he believed successfully, explained the true meaning of this conventional refusal. A

and am not allowed to tell people so myself, I may be interrupted before I have done writing the letter I have promised you. Before I enter on my task let me only assure you, as the best thanks I can offer for your hospitality, that I do not know when we have spent our time so happily as under your roof. I could enlarge, but time must be economized. Let us in such a world as this maintain between our families a close alliance, that by mutual aid and countenance we and they may the better, through God's help, stem the torrent in some degree, or at least (a rap at the door) stand our own ground. Kindest remembrances. God bless you.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. Windham I hear is to lead a troop of opponents to the Address, and be very strong against the peace."

"From Saturday, the 10th," he says,[22] "to Tuesday, 27th, at Bath. Queen's parade. Molested with callers and calling. Lord Camden down to mayor's dinner—where dined—next to Bob Steele. Lord

tedious visitor had been suffered to intrude upon his busiest hours, and when he asked, "Why did you show him in? why did you not say that I was not at home?" the answer he received convinced him that he could not lawfully employ this convenient phrase. "So I did, sir," was the reply, "but he looked so hard at me, as much as to say, I know that you are telling a lie, that I was ashamed to stand to it, so I e'en let him in."

[22] Diary.

Rosslyn here. Grenville, Lord Spencer, against the peace, and Windham strong. The people *intoxicated* with joy here and every where. Grand illumination." "God has, of His mercy to this sinful nation, allowed a suspension of the work of death and desolation. Oh that His alternate scourge and mercies might dispose us to seek Him whilst He may be found, to humble ourselves before Him, and to confess, praise, honour, and serve Him with our whole heart: but I dread the worst."[23] "Dined at Lord Rosslyn's before I left Bath. He decided against the terms of peace: could not have agreed to them. If ministry had not been changed, the peace would never have taken place; not one member of the Cabinet would have approved. The war would have gone on, and God alone knows what might have happened. Invasion was certainly intended—Massena with 40,000 men on the Essex coast. I must have been in opposition."[24]

"My days," he complains,[25] "at this place roll rapidly away, in a most unprofitable and laborious succession of frivolities. Yet I know not how this could be avoided. I am returning soon to the bustle of London and political life. May God protect me by His grace, and enable me to stand the fiery trial. I shall if I honestly wait on Him." On the 27th he left Bath, "with a heart heavy from the prospect of returning soon to parliament; from the fear of the

[23] Journal, Oct. 15.

[24] Diary, Oct. 27.

[25] Journal, Oct. 25.

war's going on; from the bustle, turmoil, and contention of my parliamentary life."

"We set out this morning," he tells Hannah More, "and are now on our way to the great city. I go like school-boy, though not creeping like snail, unwillingly to school. We shall have a scene of strange discordance. Lord Grenville is to oppose in the House of Lords, and Lord Spencer also; and Windham still more warmly in the House of Commons; but Pitt will support with all his might: his character now appears in its true light."

On the 28th he "travelled on to town. The House met. No need to have come up so soon, as it appeared on trial. In town till November 24th. Bankes a good deal with us. Muncaster in town, and Spencer Stanhope. Northern convention question, and much work about the guarantee of Turkey; Bankes staying in town for it. By our interference we have at last, I trust, carried our point quietly; Lord Hawkesbury engaging to give way, and all the rest of ministers, as well as every individual, understanding the fifth article in the way we wish. Discussion about Trinidada with Addington and Pitt. I wish that we had not retained it."[26] In answering Mr. Windham, when the Address was moved upon the second of November, he had declared to the House his apprehensions, lest our keeping Trinidada should lead to an extension of the Slave Trade, and nothing prevented his bringing this subject directly

[26] Diary.

forward, but the certainty of failure in the House of Commons, and the hopes of meeting with success elsewhere. "I am promised," he tells Mr. Stephen, "that there shall be a pause as to the appointment of commissioners for the sale of the Trinidada lands."[27]

As the session advanced, the popularity of the peace gave firmness to the new administration. "Opposition is melting away manifestly. Grey gone out of town. Tierney has declared himself friendly. Erskine and Lord Moira ditto. Only Fox and Sheridan still where they were; probably because Addington could not receive them. Pitt supports most magnanimously, and assists in every way. Addington goes on well, is honest and respectable, and improves in speaking. Little or nothing to do in the House."[28] "Pitt and Rose dined with me quietly to-day. Pitt very pleasant, and we staid chatting politics. What wonderful magnanimity! wishing to form for Addington the strongest and best possible administration."[29] "Opposition," he tells Lord Muncaster,[30] "are laying aside their unreasonable prejudices against Addington. I should not wonder if several of them could so far conquer their repugnance as to accept office under him. You know I was always sanguine as to this administration, knowing Pitt might be depended on. He has really behaved with a magnanimity unparalleled in a politician; new instances of it are daily occurring." "I do not wonder if it be misunderstood," is the

[27] Letter to J. Stephen Esq.
[28] Diary, Nov. 20.
[29] Diary, Dec. 1.
[30] Dec. 10.

remark in one of his memoranda; "this may be owing not merely to prejudice, but to natural incapacity. Little minds cannot receive the idea; it is too grand for their comprehension. But to any one who fairly considers it in all its bearings, and who estimates its full worth, it will appear one of the noblest instances of true magnanimity that was ever exhibited to the admiration and imitation of mankind."

The estimate he here forms of Mr. Pitt may be transferred not unaptly to himself. It is a rare and most instructive sight which his private Journals of this date exhibit. There have been many whom the love of ease has shielded from every temptation of ambition; and not a few in whom waywardness of temper has nourished a fierce and untractable independence; but it has seldom happened that one who was possessed of every quality of mind and fortune which could most encourage and reward ambition, has been seen to put away soberly and quietly its utmost offers. This he now did. Those who saw only the result, would never have suspected that his easy course was the result of any struggle—yet so it was: his freedom from ambition was no natural immunity, but a victory of Christian principle. "I have of late," he says, "perceived on looking inwards, the workings of ambition, of love of this world, its honours, riches, estimation, and even of worldly desires for my family, of which before I do not recollect that I was conscious. The settled judgment of my mind I would humbly hope is right. I trust that I am compara-

tively indifferent in my cool estimate of things to the goods of this life: but, alas! I become soiled and worldly-minded." "That our feelings do not correspond with our judgments, is one of the strongest proofs of our depravity and of the double man within us. I believe that retired, domestic life is by far the most happy for me, blessed as I am with affluence, &c. Yet when I see those who were my equals or inferiors, rising above me into stations of wealth, rank, &c. I find myself tempted to desire their stations, which yet I *know* would not increase my happiness, or even be more truly honourable. I speak not of the desire of an increased power of usefulness. That is another and a right feeling. Mine, against which however in its risings I struggle, and which I strive to suppress, is a sadly depraved appetite, rooted in an inordinate love of this world. Oh may the compunction I now feel be the blessed operation of the Holy Spirit.

"I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion, religious meditation, Scripture reading, &c. Hence I am lean, and cold, and hard. God, perhaps, would prosper me more in spiritual things if I were to be more diligent in using the means of grace. And though in the main I have thought myself pursuing the course chalked out for me by Providence, and with a diligence prompted and enjoined by the injunctions of Scripture, yet I suspect that I had better allot more time, say two hours or an hour and a half, to religious exercises daily, (besides Sundays,) and try

whether by so doing I cannot preserve a frame of spirit more habitually devotional, a more lively sense of unseen things, a warmer love of God, and a greater degree of hunger and thirst after righteousness, a heart less prone to be soiled with worldly cares, designs, passions, and apprehensions, and a real, undissembled longing for heaven, its pleasures, and its purity.

"I know that all external means are nothing without the quickening Spirit: but the Scripture enjoins constant prayer, and the writings and example of all good men suggest and enforce the necessity of a considerable proportion of meditation and other religious exercises, for maintaining the spiritual life vigorous and flourishing. Let me therefore make the effort in humble reliance on Divine grace. God, if He will, can turn the hearts of men, and give me favourable opportunities, and enable me to use them, and more than compensate for all the hours taken from study, business, or civility, and devoted to Him. O God, give me a single heart and a single eye, fixed on Thy favours, and resolutely determined to live to Thy glory, careless whether I succeed or not in worldly concerns, leaving all my human interests and objects to Thee, and beseeching Thee to enable me to set my affections on things above; and walking by faith, to wait on Christ, and live on Him day by day here, till at length, through His infinite and wholly unmerited mercy, I am taken to dwell with Him hereafter in everlasting happiness and glory." [31]

[31] Journal, Sunday, Dec. 20.

He was now at Broomfield, whither he had escaped to spend the holidays out of the bustle of London; yet he was too near town to be undisturbed. "Time rolls on most rapidly, and I seem even here to get little done. Captain D. with us. It is plain to see that since the mutiny, naval officers do not love the sailors: fear destroys affection. Mr. Hughes of Battersea dined with us—Dissenting minister. He is a sensible, well-informed, pious man; strongly dissenting in principle, but moderate in manner. He confessed, not one in twenty of Doddridge's pupils but who turned either Socinian or tending that way; (he himself strictly orthodox;) and he said that all the old Presbyterian places of worship were become Socinian congregations." "Miss Schimmelpenninck came to-day. Lord Castlereagh called and staid an hour and a half—about the state and prospects of Ireland and policy to be observed. Four or five thousand annually emigrate from Ulster to America. Less alarming to them than going to the south of Ireland, having so many friends and relations in America. Little farmers, £10 to £20 per annum, with large families. Strong Americans in American war—after, strong liberty men—then strong for French revolution." "I fear my time is not enough improved. Writing on Bible—paper credit. Miscellaneous reading. At work on paper for Christian Observer—a retrospect of the last year. Clearing away arrear of letters—writing them busily."

" Broomfield, Jan. 15, 1802.

" My dear Muncaster,

I am vexed with myself for having suffered January 1st to have passed away without my sending you some mark of friendly remembrance. But having come into the country for quiet, I have found, like the fox in the fable, a new set of flies fastening on me, fresh, active, and hungry. You present to me a picture I love to contemplate, a house not so liable to occasional incursions, but where, with your friends and family about you, you enjoy domestic and social comfort yourself, and dispense comforts to others whose characters you know, and whose claims you can justly estimate.

" It is one of the grievances of a great city, that one is often, not without reason, doubtful whether money given away is not on the whole more injurious than beneficial. I was talking lately with one of the distributors of the Maundy money, which was given in shillings (five shillings each to poor housekeepers) fresh from the mint; and he told me that a friend of his, a receiver of the money for admission at the play-houses, said, they always knew when the Maundy money was distributed by the new silver which was paid in to them at the theatre. I wonder whether any of it was traced through Mr. Sheridan's hands, and where it would go in its progress. By the way, were you not amused with the account of Sheridan's and Lord Eldon's speeches?

I was peculiarly impressed by Sheridan's appearing to think that being to live on £2000 per annum certain for some years, would be absolute poverty. Parliament is to meet for the despatch of business on Thursday next; and I mean in about a fortnight after to bring forward the Abolition. I have much to tell you on that head, and I wish you had been in London to second some attempts I made in Downing Street.

I am ever, my dear M.
affectionately yours,
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE."

These "Downing Street attempts" had been for Abolition objects. He had confined himself in the preceding session to a declaration of his unaltered feelings on the subject, without bringing on his usual motion. The prospect of peace had suggested to him a "grand Abolition plan," and he was "trying at a general convention."[32] This scheme would have been impeded by a fresh defeat, upon which he could not but calculate in the existing House of Commons. He thought it better therefore for his cause to let the session pass in silence, and exert his chief strength in private with the government. To this attempt he was now urged afresh. He learned from Otto, the French minister, "that if our government would propose to negociate for the Abolition, theirs would probably consent to it."[33] The perilous state

[32] Diary, Nov. 22, 1801. [33] Ib. Jan. 3.

of the West Indies might have its effect, he thought, in this country. "La Crosse's attempt to subject blacks, produces rising in Guadaloupe; and the blacks imprison the whites—one white man being killed. Our islands in extreme danger—Buonaparte's expedition, with strong French force, (25,000 troops, and sixteen sail of line, and transports,) sailed ten days ago for West Indies, to settle St. Domingo, as they say: Windham and Co. (Cobbett) affirm, that probably meant against our islands. Cobbett has been again abusing the Abolitionists. They say that Lord Cornwallis may be forced to surrender when we are so circumstanced that a rupture would be fatal to our West Indian possessions. Perhaps the step shows that the French are easy enough about the peace. They probably would not have taken it, if as earnest about peace as we are." [34]

Under these circumstances he was "busy writing Addington a letter on negociation for general Abolition," begging him to allot to it a quiet half hour as soon as he was able. "It would make, as I have said in my postscript, a short speech though a long letter.—I bar Lord Carhampton's joke, which just occurs to me, but yet I'll allow you to say it (don't speech me and letter me too) if you will but *read*. Strike, but hear me. The matter presses for immediate despatch."

[34] Diary, Jan. 3.

TO THE RIGHT HON. HENRY ADDINGTON, &c. &c.

Private.

" My dear Friend,

Though I have ever found you kindly willing to converse with me freely on that most important subject, the setting on foot a negociation with foreign powers for a universal Abolition of the Slave Trade; yet, whenever we meet, our conversation naturally turns on so many topics, and those often so interesting, that this great question appears to me not to obtain that paramount consideration which it deserves; and I am always dissatisfied with myself after having been with you, for having thus as it were diluted and weakened its impression and effect on your mind. After much very serious, therefore, and anxious reflection, lest this momentous business, which Providence seems in some sort to have committed to my care, should suffer from my mismanagement, I have determined to lay before you in writing a few thoughts, for which I claim your grave and deliberate consideration. By being committed to paper, they will not be of the fugitive and transitory nature of opinions communicated, however earnestly, and heard however attentively, in conversation, but will be a solemn and lasting record of my sentiments, and of the proposal I found on them; a proposal, in which are involved the temporal and eternal interests of a larger proportion of the human species, than probably in any proposition which ever was submitted to any

minister. Let me implore and conjure you, my dear friend, not to satisfy yourself with a hasty and superficial view of this question, but to weigh it seriously, and to form your decision on principles, to which, in the hour of calm reflection, (if a prime minister in these busy times ever can have such a thing,) you can look back with satisfaction and complacency.

"It would be a task as unnecessary, I trust, as it would be painful, to remind you in detail of the abominations which, in 1791-2, were charged on the Slave Trade, and of the facts and reasonings by which they were proved. I have lately been looking over the debates of 1792, and would to God, (I say it with solemnity, not vainly,) that it were possible to revive in their full force the emotions which were then excited *

* * * * * * * * * * *

* * Now, my friend, let me candidly appeal to you: with such a recognition of principles which I had for years been labouring to establish, and with such steps proposed for carrying them into effect, have I not just cause for grief and bitter disappointment?

"That nothing has been since done, though we are now near the year 1802, while the Slave Trade has been carried, especially of late years, to a greater extent than at any former period of our history, needs not, I hope, trouble my conscience. I am too well aware of my own infirmities not to know that an unwillingness to differ from my friends (in the degree in which I feel it and suffer from it) is one of them; but I can solemnly declare, that the subject has never

been many days absent from my mind, nor should any motives or considerations have prevented my taking any measures which were likely to promote this great object of my desires. I have all along asked myself, and consulted friends who were not liable to the bias of friendship by which I might possibly be misled, what it was best for effecting the Abolition for me to do in the circumstances in which I have been placed. The state of affairs last year rendered it prudent to forbear bringing forward the question in any form; but towards the close of the session I gave notice, that as early as possible after the Christmas recess, (i. e. about February next,) I would again lay this great subject before parliament. I have stated to the friends of the cause in private, that if defeated in the main question, I would try the subordinate ones; such as, abolishing the trade for supplying foreigners with slaves; exempting from the Slave Trade a certain district round Sierra Leone; and, above all, prohibiting the Trade in slaves for clearing and opening new lands, a motion which the acquisition of Trinidad renders peculiarly necessary; and, finally, the instituting of a negociation for effecting a general Abolition of the Slave Trade.

"I own to you however that I shall go to the performance of this duty with a heavy heart; for I am not sanguine in my hopes of effecting much through the medium of parliament, whatever part you may take in the House; though I am more sanguine in my hopes of gradually opening the eyes of the people of England

to the ruinous impolicy of our West Indian system. But I must do my duty and acquit my conscience. Yet what neither I, nor possibly even you, can effect through parliament, you may accomplish far more extensively in another manner. And let me frankly put the question to you, Can any thing be more reasonable than to expect, now that our islands have been saturating themselves with slaves for near six years longer than you consented to fix, and two years beyond Dundas's period . . than to expect, I say, that you should now adopt that measure which he (whose sentiments, you will admit, were at least not more favourable to Abolition than yours) publicly recommended in 1792. This measure gets rid of the most operative of all the objections urged against the Abolition, on which Lord Hawkesbury, I remember, chiefly rested his opposition, that of other nations carrying on the Trade if we should discontinue it. I scarce need suggest that all the European powers by whom the Slave Trade has ever been carried on, will be engaged in the negociation at Amiens; and that the ascendency possessed by Great Britain and France over their respective allies, affords means and facilities for effecting the desired object, which may never again occur. It may also be justly urged, that the other European powers can never be induced to act in concert for a purpose like this, except under the impulse and leading of a power, such as Great Britain, of acknowledged naval superiority, and which, on the common supposition of the value of the Slave

Trade, would be confessed to make a larger sacrifice than any of them. I have good reason to believe that America would gladly unite in the engagement.

"If the present opportunity of effecting a general Abolition be suffered to pass away unimproved, is it probable that any other will occur? Yet it will be conceded to me, *We* of this country are not to carry on the Slave Trade *much longer*. But whenever we do abolish for ourselves, and alone, we leave our share of the Trade to be seized on by other countries; and though we shall have then done our duty, (however tardily,) the benefit to Africa will be infinitely less than if all the European powers were to abolish by common consent, and to agree to set on foot (an idea of Pitt's, I think) a judicious system for repairing the wrongs and promoting the civilization of that much injured continent. I must add, that the other powers cannot be expected to follow our example, when it shall be at last set, because they will have to say, that we did not abolish till all objections on grounds of policy had been done away .. *we*, who had inquired laboriously, and must have consented to abolish earlier if we had believed the Slave Trade to produce all those evils to Africa which Abolitionists at first charged on it, and anti, or at least gradual, Abolitionists confessed. The proposal will with far more propriety be made by us to France, than by France to us, for many reasons; but especially for this, that we alone of all the European nations know any thing of the real nature of the mis-

chievous effects of the Slave Trade. France most likely conceives, as I myself thought before I had gone into the business, that the condition of the slaves in the colonies is the grand concern, (as it was of their society, called Amis des Noirs,) and not the detention of Africa in barbarism and misery.

"I will only add a few words for myself. It is not (to a friend I may make the avowal) without emotion that I relinquish the idea of being myself the active and chief agent in terminating this greatest of all human evils; but *you* will readily believe me when I say, that any unpleasant sensations on this head vanish at once before the prospect of effecting the desired object far more radically and completely than by any springs I could set in motion. I hope I can truly assure you also, that it helps to reconcile me to *my* loss on this occasion, that it would be *your* gain; and I should look on with joy, if the Disposer of all human events, who has already rendered you the instrument of good to mankind in the termination of one of the most bloody wars that has raged in modern times, should further honour you, by making you His agent in dispensing to the world this greatest and most extended of all earthly benefits. To your serious consideration I submit these reflections. It has been my object, not to state the chief arguments on which rests the propriety of the measure I recommend, but merely to lead your mind to the subject. You will to yourself, better than I could do it for you, suggest, apply, and enforce, as may be needful. Let

me only subjoin, that if the magnitude of the present object did not supersede all personal considerations, it would be, to me, no slight relief (here I feel but too sensibly) to get rid of almost the only question of importance on which we have differed; much more, to get rid of it by your even exceeding the utmost amount of good I had ventured to indulge the hopes of obtaining.

"I have left altogether untouched one line of argument, that I mean which rests on the critical state of the West Indies in the present moment, increased as I believe a thousand-fold by La Crosse's late attempts in Guadaloupe, with the issue of them, and by Buonaparte's expedition. But I am sure your own mind must be well exercised on this topic. As Charles the First's last word was, 'Remember,' so mine, and the sum of all I have been saying, is, Consider. I am ever, my dear Addington,

affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"Palace Yard, Jan. 2, 1802.

"P. S. The matter seems to me to press, or there are some parts of this letter I might wish to alter. Do not call it long—when the slave coast extends 3500 miles on the shore of Africa; and this, though a long letter, would be deemed a short speech."

"If Mr. Pitt had been minister when this peace was negociated, the question would have come into

discussion;"[35] but Lord Hawkesbury and Mr. Addington could not be persuaded. "I think our government favours the French expedition, under the idea of its being to restore the West Indies to order. I have been trying, in vain, to induce Addington and Lord Hawkesbury to negociate for a general Abolition of the Slave Trade. At last I wrote to both of them very serious letters, telling them I so did to leave it with them solemnly."[36]

Yet, though unsuccessful, he was not disheartened. Within a fortnight he was again in correspondence with Mr. Addington. Ever since our occupation of Trinidad and the Carib lands in the island of St. Vincent, speculation had been clamorous for their cultivation. Twice already he had defeated these attempts; and greatly was he now alarmed at hearing that the commission for their sale was making out. During the preceding year he records "a long discussion with Pitt and Addington about Trinidada;"[37] and he now writes to the latter[38]—"I do not recollect touching upon the question of St. Vincent's when we conversed concerning Trinidada. But it falls under the operation of the same general principles, and I conjure you seriously to consider before you are drawn into any concessions which you might hereafter disapprove. You perhaps may not know that for several years past Pitt has been assailed by sap and by storm, in all directions and from all quarters,

[35] Letter from W. Wilberforce Esq. to H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester, June 9, 1806.

[36] Diary, Jan. 21. [37] Ib. Nov. 24, 1801. [38] Jan. 27.

to induce him to consent to the selling of these lands; but he never would give way... I have heard various rumours about Trinidada and St. Vincent, which would have sadly discomposed me but for our last conversation. I own to you however that my mind grows very heavy on the near approach of my bringing the great subject into discussion. And I can truly say, that the not knowing what line you will take, or whether we may not differ, gives me more pain than I ought to feel on any such account. Yet as it results from the esteem and affection I entertain for you, I flatter myself you will put a kind construction on it, and on any effects it may produce. Public men should be made of harder materials than I am, to go through such work as they may be called to."

He wrote at the same time to Mr. Pitt, and on the 3rd of February "went to him and talked a good deal about the Slave Trade. He firm to prevent importation for cultivating new lands. Walked with him. Introduced to Mrs. Trimmer. Talked with Lord Camden about Lord Castlereagh's going Governor-General to India. Pitt seemed to prefer for him Presidentship of the Board of Control. Were Lord Hawkesbury to be removed by his father's death to the House of Lords, then the government would sadly want House of Commons' talent. Yet the idea of bringing forward Tierney into high office is shocking. That the factious line he has pursued should be the shortest road he could have taken to

political eminence, is really too bad. I am grieved at Addington's not at once recoiling from the idea of settling Trinidada with imported slaves, of which it would take a million. 4th. Pitt has had a long conversation with Addington, and says it was satisfactory."[39]

TO W. WILBERFORCE ESQ.

"Park Place, Thursday, Feb. 4.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I have had a long conversation with Addington, and have great reason to hope from it that he has in no degree committed himself on any point that can lead to an increased importation of negroes; and he is quite open, and even in many views favourable to all the powerful considerations which we have to urge. I am sure he will settle nothing finally till I have seen him again.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. PITT."

He was not sufficiently satisfied with the conduct of the government to leave the matter absolutely to them. "The Slave Trade," he tells Lord Muncaster,[40] "will, in some shape or other, be one of the first questions brought before parliament. Perhaps Canning will bring forward a motion for preventing the importation of slaves for clearing new lands. I am happy to tell you that I think Pitt remains firm. Oh what an eternal blot would it

[39] Diary. [40] Feb. 4.

be on the character of parliament, if, after having resolved by an immense majority that the Slave Trade should be gradually abolished, we should enter on the cultivation of a new settlement, the complete peopling of which with negro slaves, reckoning the number always lost in opening uncleared lands, would take near a million of human beings!"

Over this business he now watched carefully. "Feb. 8th. Went after Canning. Dined at Stephen's, to meet and secure Dr. Lawrence and Farquhar about question of opening new lands; having declined dining at Mons. Otto's, to meet Addington and Lord Glenbervie, &c. 11th. Long talk with Canning about his motion against opening new lands by imported Africans—staunch and warm for Abolition. Babington was strongly impressed the other day with Addington's not defending Pitt upon the army extraordinaries, and said a few more such days would infallibly break up their friendship. It was but two hours after, that Courtenay, in the House, animadverted on Addington's losing his regard for his old friends, out of deference to his new allies. I mentioned it to Addington, who took it properly."

"London, Feb. 16, 1802.

"My dear Muncaster,

I cannot tell you all that has passed, or is passing, about Canning's motion, but I am in great hopes it will be carried. And it seems the persuasion among the friends of Abolition here, that my general

motion had better follow his. I will frankly own to you I am not so clear of this; but I am unwilling to follow my own judgment in such a case. Meanwhile I am urging Addington.

"I was pleased, my dear Muncaster, at the ebullition of honest indignation which escaped from you in your last, when speaking on this subject; and I own to you that when I suffer my mind to dwell on the various horrors of which that accursed system of wickedness and cruelty is the author, there is something in its being permitted with so much sang-froid in this benevolent age, as it affects to be called, which quite overcomes my patience, and sickens me of public life and public men. But the real fault is our thinking better of them in general than they deserve. Alas, my friend, when men do not act from religious principles, little dependence is to be placed on them: I am glad while they travel the same road with me, but I am not much surprised when they part company.

"The scene in the House on the discussion on the army extraordinaries, the other night, was one in which a person of your speculating turn would have had much food for reasoning and conjecture. There are those who would rejoice in separating Pitt and Addington. But they have both generous minds, and I trust all the efforts of the shabby will be exerted in vain. Believe me, my dear Muncaster, to be

ever yours very affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His Diary proceeds to the other business of the session. "Feb. 17th. House—Civil List debate—Sutton—Prince of Wales's claim. 18th. Board of Agriculture. Dined Lord Camden's—Lord Eldon, Redesdale, Pitt, Villiers, Castlereagh, and others. Pitt very clever. Long talk with G. How adroit are people of inferior capacities in defending themselves! I hear a shocking account of French morals from Paris. Massena says he stays there to be 'prêt à tout ce qui peut arriver.' People shown through fourteen rooms before they get to Buonaparte, and officers with pass-words, without which the First Consul not approachable. Bread 14 sous per lb. The people on the Pont Nœuf said we brought the king in slavery to Paris when bread was 9 sous, now we are quiet when it is 14. Lord Sheffield gives a most pleasing account of Toussaint, of his generous, amiable temper and disposition; but in the field a rigid disciplinarian—he has 60,000 men trained under him—he behaved with the utmost kindness to his old master. 25th. Sitting in Civil List Committee. Bankes and I had doubts, but upon talking with Addington we agreed we might be left on the list.

"March 1st. Morning, Proclamation Society meeting. Then Civil List Committee—considering Report. Extremely uneasy about the advances to the Princes. Deviation from Burke's Bill as to classification, and yet I trust I did my duty, and will do it, not with a morbid irritability, but as a Christian ought to do, with a spirit of power and love, and of a sound mind.

There is much in the Committee which is too obsequious." He makes the same complaint a few days later to Lord Muncaster.[41] "There have been advances, as you will know, to the Prince of Wales, Duke of York, and Duke of Clarence; and surely if a Committee of the House of Commons suffers such a concession to pass without animadversion, no minister can ever refuse the authority, ascendency, and importunity of a king.

"I have been a good deal embarrassed whether to bring on my general question before Canning's, and have been strongly disposed to do so; but I have at length nearly determined to let Canning's have the precedence, on the ground that I really believe we have a good chance of carrying his motion, or of prevailing on Addington to give up the settling of Trinidada, or to impose such conditions as may prevent the importation of Africans for that purpose. Canning thinks that by bringing on my general question first, I should cement together all the West Indians, whereas he has now the hope of prevailing on several Jamaica planters to join him."

His chief employments at this season may be seen by occasional extracts from his Diary.

"March 9th. By Lady S.'s desire called on her. Affecting account of her situation—cruel treatment by her sons. How awful to remember them very good-natured young men! How little can one depend upon natural temper, which may be soured as life advances!

[41] March 1.

Evening, went to Royal Institution lecture—the whole sight interesting. 13th. Of late much on Civil List Committee. Occupied all this morning by Sir Sidney Smith. There appears a probability of a renewal of the war—shocking. We have not been thankful enough to God for the prospect of peace. At Paris, Buonaparte now unpopular, and said, since this Lyons expedition, and becoming King of Italian Republic, to have lost his head. The Duke of Bedford suddenly cut off amidst all his prosperity. Alas! 16th. Dined at Wilbraham Bootle's—meeting Lord and Lady Alvanley, Lord and Lady Belgrave, Bishop of London. A good deal of talk about the Duke of Bedford, &c. Fox had that day spoken his funeral oration in moving writ for Tavistock; speaking of him as one of the best of men. 20th. Morning, Proclamation Society. Dined Stephen's. Much talk about West Indies' state and Abolition conduct at home. News of French fleet's arrival in West Indies. Resisted by Toussaint's order. Massacre of whites in Guadaloupe reported. All people siding with Buonaparte and wishing his arms success over Toussaint's, as the only way of preventing Black empire in the West Indies. Stephen's contrary system, I believe, right in the main. Windham strongly prejudiced against Hannah More in the Blagden affair. 22nd. Called Pitt's, and much political and Slave Trade talk—earnestly wished him to move a suspension, or question about Abolition on ground of imminent danger to West Indies from state of St. Domingo, and necessity of not letting dispro-

portion of blacks to whites be increased. 23rd. Evening, to Lady Alvanley's music party. Mrs. Bates, Miss Anguishes, Dean of Raphoe and daughters, sang. Much entertained. 26th. Dined at home. Ludlam, Henry Thornton, Stephen, &c. Talked about Sierra Leone, and in the evening about Christian Observer. Fixed Macaulay should take management. He, Pearson, and Babington with us. April 2nd. Morning, busy, Society for Bettering Condition of the Poor. Dr. Carmichael Smyth's petition. House."

Dr. Carmichael Smyth had discovered a safe and simple fumigation, which had been found to arrest the infectious influence of the most malignant fevers. The discovery was brought under the notice of Mr. Wilberforce, who thought it worthy of a parliamentary reward. He had transferred to other hands the conduct of Dr. Jenner's application,[42] because "he was a common hack in such matters;" but for Dr. Smyth he could find no other patron, and he therefore undertook the task himself, and devoted to it many hours in every week throughout the session.

"Canning moved for Trinidada papers. Stephen published his pamphlet[43] on West Indies. Buonaparte's expedition landed in St. Domingo, and claiming victories. I am busy trying to effect legislative lessening of number of oaths. I do not like the advances to the Princes. Ludlam writes home to state

[42] Vid. Life of Jenner.

[43] The "Crisis of the Sugar Colonies," the first of a series of masterly pamphlets by which Mr. Stephen most effectually promoted the interests of the negro cause.

to us the melancholy condition of our Sierra Leone colony, and to recommend its relinquishment. Definitive treaty came, on Monday. Busy about cotton mills' regulation. Doubtful in my own mind whether would continue member for Yorkshire. My days are sadly cut up. People with me at breakfast—afterwards till one—and again sometimes broken in on in the evening. 7th. Breakfast—Dean of Raphoe, &c. Small Debt Society's committee. House till half-past eight. Sir. William Scott's speech, moving for leave to bring in Clergy's Non-residence Bill—curiosa felicitas of language. Sir Robert Peel's Bill—motion well received for morals of apprentices, &c. in cotton factories." On this subject he had written a few days before,

TO THOMAS BERNARD ESQ. FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

"Palace Yard, Wednesday morning.

"My dear Sir,

I so much respect the judgment of the Committee,[41] and I think so much weight is due to the considerations suggested by Sir Robert Peel, and even to his feelings, (when our success in the excellent measure in contemplation will be in so great a degree owing to his benevolent and public-spirited exertions,) that I will not press any ideas of my own, as to the extension of the plan to any others than apprentices, contrary to what may be the general opinion which the gentlemen of the Committee may form on full

[41] Of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor.

consideration. I cannot however but earnestly recommend it to them, to consider of some way of securing to the children some religious instruction, more effectually than by the plan as it at present stands; and I trust that this subject, on which it must be confessed there are difficulties, will be understood to be reserved for further consideration.

"It has happened somewhat remarkably, that whilst we have been engaged on this subject, I have received a letter from a poor but honest and hard-working couple, whose child was barbarously torn from them, and sent down to a distant cotton mill. I have since conversed with these people, and seldom have heard a more artless, affecting tale than they related. The letter they wrote me I send, as perhaps the gentlemen present may like to hear it. I am very sorry to be prevented by a House of Commons' committee from attending you as I had wished this morning. But I am persuaded I shall not be wanted. I beg you however to explain the cause of my non-appearance.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"April 10th. Recovering from an attack of fever—little done all day. Evening, a long and interesting conversation with W. Smith about Unitarianism and orthodoxy. Morning, long talk with Lord Belgrave, Parke, and Babington about Sunday Bill. Glad to

hear from Parke that many young rising legal men religious—Sunday consultations becoming far rarer —lawyers attending public worship. Poor Lord Kenyon dead, and Ned Law succeeding him. I have hopes Perceval will still prove a public blessing in a high station: he is to be Attorney-General. 15th. Stephen, morning. Dr. Carmichael Smyth's petition. House on Slaves. Canning's motion fixed for 13th of May."

"The lateness of the day," he tells Lord Muncaster,[45] "will render it next to impossible for me to bring forward my motion afterwards with any effect. Yet it would have been clearly wrong in me not to have allowed him to take the first move under all the circumstances. If his motion be carried it is a capital step gained, though I am sick, as well as you, of half-measures, and am filled with indignation whenever I think of what is going forward all the while we are trifling and trimming between our consciences and our purses. Have you seen 'the Crisis of the Sugar Colonies?' Hawkesbury owns it is extremely able."

'"April 22nd. Still busy as usual. Dr. C. Smyth's committee. At the public offices. Sir R. Buxton mentioned Pitt's birth-day dinner. 27th. To town. Kept long in Dr. C. Smyth's committee. House till ten. 28th. Town early. Proclamation Committee. Busy on Sunday Bill. Definitive treaty came over. 29th. To town. Illumination for the peace. Cobbett's windows broke. The mob very good-natured."

[45] To Lord Muncaster, April 14.

"The poor Porcupine's windows have been smashed for not rejoicing as you and I do," writes Mr. Bankes;[46] "people are shocked by a want of sympathy—ridentibus arrident. However he was not bound to rejoice, but he should have illuminated."

"May 3rd. To town early, to see Addington about Hull dock. Then Proclamation Society. Then dock meeting, and nine or so delegated. Then House till late. Windham's preparatory speech about definitive treaty. Addington declared our interest concerned in the French West Indian expedition to rescue St. Domingo from the blacks, who had usurped it, &c. I was shocked. 'Whatever persons might have thought before,' he said, 'they must think this now.' 6th. I find it is too late to get through Sunday Bill, or Oath measure. I cannot get people to act. Windham, Dr. Lawrence, Tom Grenville, Lord Temple, Elliot, move papers, and speechify; all to prove articles of peace disgraceful. 7th. House, on Nicoll's motion, to censure, and Belgrave's amendment, to thank Pitt, till six in the morning. Good debate—Fox excellently pleasant. 15th. Definitive treaty discussion. Windham moved Address by long and able speech. Lord Hawkesbury three hours in answering—very able. In the House till four—adjourned the debate. 14th. House till near four again—Sheridan infinitely witty, having been drinking. 20th. To town, to meet Pitt upon the Slave Trade."

[46] Letter from Henry Bankes Esq. to William Wilberforce Esq.

Mr. Canning's promised motion had been repeatedly deferred, and was now again postponed. "It would be so very little in the spirit of the times," says Mr. Canning,[47] "to refuse any concession to *regicides*, that I am afraid I must, though multum invitus, agree to the request of William Smith," (then known by the soubriquet of king-killer,) "and put off Trinidad till Tuesday."

"24th. Town after breakfast, to which Mr. Mason, a minister at New York, came, and much talk about religion, &c. in America. House on Bull-baiting Bill—Windham's speech aimed expressly at me, though I had not spoken—quite prepared. I too little possessed, and having lost my notes, forgot some things I meant to say, but was told I did very well. Bull-baiting Bill lost, 64 against 51. Sir Richard Hill's foolish speech. Windham's malignity against what he calls fanaticism. What cause have we for thankfulness that we enjoy so much civil and religious liberty! 26th. Town. Called on Lord Castlereagh and Forster, about Abolition. Dr. C. Smyth's committee. House, and saw Canning about his motion—balancing whether to bring on question, though so late. French accounts from St. Domingo abuse Toussaint in the grossest terms; they have been stoutly resisted. 27th. Canning's motion—House flat—the motion sadly too short. No division on Addington's sad speech: only holding out hope of inquiry next year, when in 1792 he voted for Abolition

[47] Letter to William Wilberforce Esq. May 19.

in 1796, against Hawkesbury, even when Dundas had thrown up his resolutions. I grieved to the heart. 28th. Consulting friends about my proper part as to Abolition. At Merchant Taylors' Hall—grand celebration of Pitt's birth-day—Lord Spencer chairman —823 tickets and people—near 200 more asked for. I withdrew, after walking about for an hour and seeing every body, just as dinner going on table. All went off well. Pitt not there. 29th. Talking with Bankes and Lady Auckland—times very dissipated—masquerades the rage. Dined with General Ross, to meet Lord Cornwallis, Lord and Lady Chatham, and others. Lord Cornwallis very civil, and unaffected, and pleasing. Talked about India in pleasing terms, and the happiness we diffused there, and the equity of our government. He spoke with great apparent pleasure: gave great praise to Barlow. Afraid of Sir William Jones; and always found him much to do, and took him into his council; where otherwise he might have thwarted. Lord Chatham very friendly. Both talked of West Indies, and of slaves' ill treatment, and West Indian character, in strong terms. 31st. Town. Proclamation Society meeting. House —Non-residence Bill, till half-past eleven. Windham, Addington, and Sir William Scott, and Grant, earnest for giving to bishops unqualified discretion, and power over their clergy. Attorney-General Perceval contra. Simeon long, but good and spirited speech. Long talk with Grant and Babington on Slavery Abolition conduct."

The adverse temper of the existing House of Commons had been shown too plainly to be doubted. Mr. Addington had coldly and reluctantly engaged to pause before he opened St. Vincent's and Trinidad for the reception of another million of Africans; whilst the fierce conflicts of St. Domingo, and the insurrections of Dominica and Tobago, had brought general reproach upon the negro name. "The Morning Chronicle has been putting in lying accounts of negro cruelty in St. Domingo, evidently to create an odium against the blacks."[48] To all this was added the miserable state of Sierra Leone, which having struggled through external difficulties was now threatened with destruction by the rebellious spirit of the Nova Scotia negroes. Yet upon the whole he resolved to bring his motion forward, and introduced it upon the 3rd of June, though "not able to get it on till too late, when the House was almost empty."[49] But a dissolution was too near to allow him to bring his motion to any practical conclusion, and upon the 14th he felt "compelled to give it up for this year."[50] The session lingered on another fortnight, during which he "got through Bill for Hull docks,"[51] and moved and unanimously carried a grant of £5000 as a national reward for Dr. C. Smyth's discovery. "This affair has ended well, and I have cause for thankfulness."

Parliament was prorogued upon the 28th of June, and dissolved upon the 29th. Upon the 30th, he was

[48] Diary. [49] Ib. [50] Ib.
[51] Diary, June 24.

"off before nine from Broomfield," on his journey to the north. The "Beverley, Hull, and York elections" were already "raging;" but "no opposition" was "talked of for the county."[52] Early in the spring there had been some rumours of a contest, but they had "now vanished." He had, of necessity, been more than ever absent from the county since his last election; and this had given rise to a report, that he intended to retire from its representation. "I have been strongly urged," he told Mr. Hey,[53] "to advertise my intention of offering my services in the ensuing general election. But I pause. Nor do I think it probable, unless something happens in the interval, that the peace of the county will be disturbed. I fear my pride would be wounded were I to be turned out; but after the risings of this bad passion should have been conquered, I own I should rejoice in my liberty. However, I would leave my continuance in public life to Providence, and not retire till its signal be given for my release."

"I can scarcely enough impress you with a sense of the degree in which I shrink from the very idea of a parliamentary struggle. Whether it be the effect of my being so much older, or from some other cause, I quite abhor the prospect of a general election; and to be active in preserving my situation seems like labouring to be permitted to tug at the oar like a galley slave with fetters on my legs and the lash at my back. I pant for quiet and retirement; and what

[52] Diary, June 24. [53] Feb. 24, 1802.

is more, I entertain serious doubt whether I should not act wisely in retiring from my public station, whether I should not be able to promote the glory of God and the good of my fellow-creatures more in private. My pen might then be employed regularly and assiduously. But I am deterred from yielding to the impulse I feel thus to secede, by the fear of carving for myself."[54]

He reached the West Riding upon the first of July, and after a hasty canvass, was at York upon "the election day, July 12th. Got up earlyish to think of speech. To tavern by ten, and mounted at half-past ten—Pulleyn's horse. People quiet, till at last, when attacked the horse to get at the ribands Sir R. Hildyard moved my election; Sir M. Sykes seconded me. Bacon Frank moved Lascelles; Morritt seconded. I pleased people in speaking, and did well. Crowded hall, and castle yard immensely so."[55] "It was, indeed," says a by-stander,[56] "an august and interesting scene; not one hand was lifted up against him, and the surrounding countenances were expressive of the greatest delight and esteem towards him."

"I trust," he said, "that I have not been inattentive to the local concerns and particular interests of my constituents. Owing chiefly to a weakly constitution, which after the labours of a session of parliament requires to be recruited by rest and quiet,

[54] To W. Hey Esq. April 14. [55] Diary, July 12.
[56] William Gray Esq. to Mrs. Wilberforce, July 14.

I have been less personally present among you than it was my wish to be; but I have trusted that you would prefer the solid substance of diligent attention to your public and private concerns, before those petty personal assiduities in which *they* must needs abound, who by them would compensate for the scanty performance of more important duties. I see with pleasure, gentlemen," he continued after the interruption of an acclamation of assent, " that I have not erred in the judgment which I formed of your sentiments and feelings; I have not calculated amiss upon the liberal spirit with which you think, and feel, and act towards your representative in parliament."

He noticed next, the " difficulty of judging aright in complicated cases, which should teach those who think differently on political subjects, mutual moderation, forbearance, and candour. We cannot expect that even our constituents should approve of every particular of our conduct. They may, indeed, and ought to require that their representative should agree with them in great principles, and likewise in the general line to be observed in any given conjuncture of affairs. But provided there be this agreement, they ought not too scrupulously to look for an exact coincidence in every individual vote, and on every particular occasion. I rejoice to find that you approve of these principles; they are principles worthy of the rank you hold and of the place you fill in our national representation. They send

your member to parliament the free and liberal representative of a free people, and not your slave, fettered and shackled, a character which I should feel degrading, though it were to be the slave even of the county of York itself. Suffer me to say, (a sentiment, the avowal of which, remarks that have been elsewhere made render not improper,) that I consider the honour of being your representative, as one of the highest dignities I could enjoy. Great is my respect for hereditary honours. It is still greater for those which have been granted by the well-judging hand of our sovereign, for brilliant exploits rendered to the public by our great naval and military commanders, or for long and faithful services in public offices of high trust and laborious duty. But he must have a mind constituted very differently from mine, his estimate of things must be formed on very different principles, who could account as more honourable *that* nobility which should be granted from motives of political interest or personal favour, than the dignified and exalted station to which *he* is elevated, who by the free and united voice of the freeholders of Yorkshire, is selected to be the depositary of their interests, and the guardian of their rights."

On the following Wednesday, he set "off from" Mr. "Gray's house, where" he had been "most kindly received," and had met Mr. "Richardson, a plain man of God, truly edifying," and "got to Duncombe's to dinner." "I came yesterday," he tells

Mrs. Wilberforce,[57] "to this place, (Copgrove,) the seat of my late colleague, Duncombe. He is sitting by me, and desires his best respects to you. It is just such a place as you and I should like to live in; quiet and beautiful, without pomp. I am going through Harrowgate to Harewood, and wish you were with me, seeing these pretty rural scenes." "You have made your old colleague very happy," he heard a few days afterwards, from Lord Muncaster,[58] "by going to him at Copgrove. He has written to me quite a letter of satisfaction and delight at seeing you, and has sent me your speech on the election, which I was most glad to read. Nothing I think could be more open and judicious; and as you felt your way you pushed the points on admirably, and must for ever have done away with those little pitiful objections, grounded on your necessary absence from the county, with which disinclined persons were endeavouring to undermine your popularity. I never read any thing better calculated for the purpose."

Leaving Copgrove on the 15th, he proceeded "through Knaresborough to Harewood. Repton, the layer out of ground, there. Music in the evening; I reading also at will. All quite easy and obliging, perfect liberty. The next day I drove out Repton in a single-horse chaise, to survey the grounds."[59] "This is really one not only of the most magnificent, but of the finest places in England. Great natural beauty,

[57] July 15. [58] To W. Wilberforce Esq. July 22.
[59] Diary, July 16.

vast woods, expanses of water, a river winding through a valley portioned into innumerable enclosures. Within the house, perfect ease and great good-humour without the smallest mixture of pomp and parade, except in the rooms themselves, which are too gaudy for my taste."[60] "Strolled out with a book. William Hey dined, and in the evening I went with him to Leeds." Upon the 21st, "The birth-day of my two eldest children, reached Broomfield safely, I thank God, and found all well, and joyful to see me. I have been received in Yorkshire with the utmost possible kindness, and even zeal. Yet even this shows how uncertain (as we say) is all popularity. God alone can turn the heart. Those most kind whom I had no reason to expect so. Sir Christopher Sykes, &c."[61]

He now returned at once to the labours of that honourable post which he had occupied for eighteen years. "The event," writes his cousin, Lord Carrington,[62] (in a letter, docketted, "kind condolence on my re-election,") "which has given your other friends so much pleasure, has filled me with sentiments of an opposite nature. No constitution can stand, during the ordinary period of active life, such exertions as yours have been in the service of the county of York. It would have been better if, like Windham, but without his struggle and defeat, you had taken refuge in a close borough, the means of which I should have been proud to have afforded you."

[60] To Mrs. Wilberforce, July 16. [61] Diary. [62] July 15.

A period of unusual leisure seemed now before him, and he entered on it with a degree of deep and serious reflection, for which few find opportunity in the middle of a busy life. He took a calm and thoughtful estimate of his situation and his faculties, inquiring where they were most capable of employment and improvement. The result of these reflections in "the reed house," (a favourite arbour in his garden,) he "put down on paper, that they might not be the fugitive thoughts of the moment, but the deliberate conclusions of his judgment recorded for his own use; or possibly, that my dear wife, for the benefit of my children, may know the considerations by which I am guided in the direction of my labours and the employment of my time.

"When I look into my own mind, I find it a perfect chaos, wherein the little knowledge which I do possess is but confusedly and darkly visible; and where, from the want of classification and recapitulation, and from having satisfied myself with a superficial acquaintance with things, and having propositions brought into and left in my mind, without settling the result, discriminating the true from the false, the certain from the uncertain—I am in truth shamefully ignorant of many subjects which I seem to know, and should be thoroughly acquainted with. What has brought me into this state is a treacherous memory, and my having from nature a quick perception and lively imagination, with an understanding (either naturally or from bad habits) defective in

the power of steadily contemplating many objects without confusion. This is really weakness of intellect, but it might have been lessened by early and habitual efforts. The mathematics and algebra would here have been eminently useful to me; method too might have been highly beneficial in keeping me from a habit of half attention.—Alas, these remedies were neglected, and from 17 to 21, when I ought to have been under that strict and wholesome regimen which the peculiar diseases of my intellectual powers seemed to require, I was strengthening these natural maladies: and this till æt. 26. And though since that time I have been endeavouring to employ my talents, in the largest sense, to the glory of God, and the good of man; yet, alas, how ineffectually! and my peculiar situation, and the great variety of things and persons with which it renders me conversant, has kept me sadly back.

"I am tempted to think that it is now too late to mend my plan practically, with any effect; yet as it has pleased God to call me again to parliament, and as the greater my natural infirmities the more every aid is wanted, I am resolved to enter on a course of more sytematic retention of the little I know or can acquire, and I mean to note down roughly the scheme of study it will be best for me to pursue. I would not overrate knowledge, or proficiency in any human pursuits or acquirements; but inasmuch as God works by human means, it seems to be our duty to labour diligently in the pursuit of those qualifications, which appear to be the instruments of usefulness for our

particular station and occupation in life. Eloquence in its right sense is of great effect in every free community; and as it has pleased God to endow me with a certain natural turn for public speaking, and by His providence to place me in a situation in which there is room for the use of that talent, it seems to be my duty to improve that natural faculty, and cultivate that true eloquence which alone is suitable to the character of a follower of the Saviour, who was full of love, truth, and lowliness. Besides, the very basis of eloquence, in the sense in which I use it, is wisdom and knowledge, a thorough acquaintance with one's subject, the sure possession of it, and power of promptly calling up and using it. But let me ever remember here what cause there is for continual watchfulness and godly jealousy, lest the pursuit should lead to an inordinate love of worldly estimation, to vanity, and pride; and if to them, in its consequence to the malignant passions."

"I have been thinking seriously," he says a few days later,[63] "and praying to God for direction as to the right employment of my time and direction of my studies: and I put down such propositions as are pretty clear . . . . . All this suggests that I should misapply my few remaining years, by devoting my whole or even my chief time and efforts to oratory. This may justly occupy some degree of them, especially so far as concerns, first, the invigorating the powers of my mind, and fixing my attention, and exerting at once attention, memory, and invention; and, secondly, the

[63] Aug. 17.

fixing, securing, and retaining necessary knowledge of different kinds, and bringing it forth for use." But his general conclusion was, "to make the cultivation of these powers his secondary object," leaving as his "main" object "the promotion of his moral and religious usefulness."—"Besides," he adds, "whatever dreams of ambition I may have indulged, it now seems clear, that my part is to give the example of an independent member of parliament, and a man of religion, discharging with activity and fidelity the duties of his trust, and not seeking to render his parliamentary station a ladder by which to rise to a higher eminence. What has passed of late years, (the number of country gentlemen made peers, &c.) renders it particularly necessary to give this lesson; and from whom can it be required, if not from him who professes to have set his affections on things above, and to consider himself as a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth? If it should ever please God to call me to any situation of power, or to any higher eminence, which I do not expect, He would furnish me with the talents necessary for the discharge of its duties. But as this is highly improbable, I should do wrong to sacrifice an opportunity of usefulness which is within my reach, in order to qualify myself for a station I am not likely ever to fill."

The recurrence of his birth-day (æt. 43) led him again a few days later to review his situation and employments. He had of late found more time than usual for general reading. To this he was so much

devoted, that he found it, he has often said, likely to encroach more than any press of business upon the hours allotted to devotion. "I find books," he says,[64] "alienate my heart from God as much as any thing. I have been framing a plan of study for myself, but let me remember that one thing is needful, that if my heart cannot be kept in a spiritual state without so much prayer, meditation, Scripture reading, &c. as are incompatible with study and business, I must *seek first* the righteousness of God. Yet, O Lord, when I think how little I have done, I am ashamed and confounded, and I would fain honour God more than I have yet done. Oh let me record His signal mercies during the past year. My health has been uniformly good till lately; and now I suffer no pain. Many instances of mortality around me of younger and stronger men, and I am spared. My children, who were all ill last winter, have enjoyed remarkably good health. And can it be aught but the mercy of God which overruled the hearts of my friends in Yorkshire, and rendered them all so kind and zealous towards me, though I had never been there since the former election? All went off well.

"Indeed, who is there that has so many blessings? Let me record some of them:—Affluence, without the highest rank.[65] A good understanding and a happy temper. Kind friends, and a greater number than

[64] Journal, August 21.

[65] Looking over this passage on his 71st birth-day, he added as a note to the last two words, "This a great blessing."

almost any one. Domestic happiness beyond what could have been conceived possible. A situation in life most honourable; and above all, a most favourable situation for eternity—the means of grace in abundance, and repeated motions of conscience, the effect, I believe, of the Holy Spirit. Which way soever I turn I see marks of the goodness and long-suffering of God. Oh that I may be more filled with gratitude!

"How merciful that I was not early brought into office, in 1782-3-4! This would probably have prevented my going abroad, with all that through the providence of God followed. Then my having such kind friends, my book, &c. All has succeeded with me, and God has by His preventing grace kept me from publicly disgracing the Christian profession. O my soul, praise the Lord, and forget not all His mercies. God is love, and His promises are sure. What though I have been sadly wanting to myself, yet we are assured that those that come unto Him He will in no wise cast out. I therefore look to Him with humble hope, I disclaim every other plea than that of the publican, offered up through the Redeemer; but I would animate my hopes, trusting in Him that He will perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle me."

"I fear," he says in the course of the next month,[66] "that I have not studied the Scriptures enough. Surely in the summer recess I ought to read Scripture an hour or two every day, besides prayer, devotional reading, and meditation. God will prosper me better

[66] Journal, Sept. 19.

if I wait on Him. The experience of all good men shows, that without constant prayer and watchfulness the life of God in the soul stagnates. Doddridge's morning and evening devotions were serious matters. Colonel Gardiner always spent hours in prayer in the morning before he came forth. Bonnell practised private devotions largely morning and evening, (Life, 129,) and repeated Psalms, dressing and undressing, to raise his mind to heavenly things. I would look up to God to make the means effectual, but let me use them with humble thankfulness, and bless God for the almost unequalled advantages and privileges I enjoy."

Again he says, "Is it that my devotions are too much hurried, that I do not read Scripture enough, or how is it, that I leave with reluctance the mere chit-chat of Boswell's Johnson, for what ought to be the grateful offices of prayer and praise? Yet if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. I must then grow in grace. I must love God more. I must feel the power of Divine things more. Whether I am more or less learned signifies not. Whether even I execute the work which I deem useful is comparatively unimportant. But beware, O my soul, of lukewarmness.——I feel it difficult to adjust the due degree of time to be allotted to prayer, Scripture reading, and other religious exercises. God loves mercy better than sacrifice, and there is a danger of a superstitious spirit, of being led to depend on the forms of religion. Yet the experience and example of good men seems a fair guide. At all

events however, some way or other, my affections must be set on things above. God is willing to supply our needs. They who wait on Him shall renew their strength. I humbly trust in His promises."

And again, "I am this morning deeply impressed with a sense of the importance and reality of Divine things, and I have prayed with more fervour than usual that God would increase in me His love, and that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith, that I may pass the day in His fear and love. Alas! some thoughts have shot across my heart as if it were a slavery and galling restraint thus to have God always over me. I hope the suggestion was grievous to me; but how much more, even against my clear judgment, do I find myself affected by earthly than by heavenly things—political topics, House of Commons' treatment, &c.: alas, that these trifles of a day should interest my feelings so warmly! I ought indeed to engage in them 'fervently in spirit,' but yet with a heart conscious that it is discharging a duty, not as if it were to my taste. Oh how sadly I fear does love of human estimation still subsist within me! How little do I love my fellow-creatures, especially my enemies, with the love of a real Christian! How little am I duly affected with the sad state of careless or ungodly acquaintance!——I have lately been led to think of that part of my life wherein I lived without God in the world, wasting and even abusing all the faculties He had given me for His glory. Surely when I think of the way in which I went on for many years,

from about sixteen to 1785-6, I can only fall down with astonishment as well as humiliation before the throne of grace, and adore with wonder, no less than remorse and gratitude, that infinite mercy of God which did not cast me off, but on the contrary, guiding me by a way which I knew not, led me to those from whom I was to receive the knowledge of salvation, (not more manifestly His work was St. Paul's instruction by Ananias,) and above all, softened my hard heart, fixed my inconstant temper, and though with sad occasional relapses, and above all, shameful unprofitableness, has enabled me to continue until this day. Praise the Lord, O my soul!"

The whole of this autumn was spent at Broomfield; and his plans of study were often interrupted by its neighbourhood to London. "I have found myself so incessantly worried here with company, that I am meditating to retire to some other place for quiet. I know too well 'cœlum non animum mutant,' &c. Yet much company is the bane of grace in the soul, and my time withheld from the best of worldly society is worn away by 'the minor poets.'"[67]

Yet he thus "saw some interesting people, and got through a good deal of reading, and occasional composition. Aug. 25th. Abbé Gregoire and Smith the chemist breakfasted. I do not much *affect* the Abbé; 'La Religion, Humanité, la Liberté. That is my object.'" "Montagu called; fresh from France. The face of all in Paris military, soldiers with naked

[67] Diary, Sept. 12.

bayonets in the gardens, streets, &c. Men of letters patronized; handsomely lodged, boarded, &c. Montagu saw Buonaparte at the Institute, attending a debate concerning a canal's course; and he spoke for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, recapitulating the arguments, &c. talking of the 'gouvernement,' what it would do, &c. He seemed nervous at first—care-worn also. Was dressed plainly; no honours or distinction in his dress, seat, &c. He went away in a carriage, with one footman. He had been four hours at a council, and came to this meeting and staid two hours. The philosophers, even the greatest in mathematics, &c. appeared extremely ignorant in politics. Several churches converted into stables, public store-houses, &c. Many noblemen's houses razed to the ground; Chantilly entirely, yet the buyer got nothing by it." "Mr. Lancaster came to the door, and I too lightly asked him to come in; but when in, treated him kindly. Talked much on Quakers' opinions—he pretty orthodox—teaches 280 children of his own collection—elder boys teach, he superintends." "My books have been Gibbon's Decline and Macartney's China; also Edwards On the Religious Affections—an excellent book. It discovers close scrutiny into the heart, and accurate observation of its workings. The reasoning is so simple and clear that it would, in that view only, be useful to a young man. Writing a paper for the Christian Observer; and letters many."

TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

" Broomfield, Sept. 7, 1802.

" My dear Friend,

It has, you know, been matter of controversy, what degrees or kind of resemblance in the thoughts of different writers are proofs that the one has borrowed from the other. You may perhaps at first suspect some laying of heads together, when you read what I am about to propose to you—that you should lend your aid a little to the cause of the Christian Observer. I called on Henry [Thornton] last night to state to him this my opinion, when I found that he had already written to you on the same subject But as, where there is no servile imitation, as the critics hold, there will be diversities, so here I find Henry and I, agreeing in the main idea, had differed in the next link of the chain. He wished you, I find, to send us an account of Miss H. Bird's last hours. Nothing on that subject can at all equal the simple expression of your feelings on the spot. Never shall I forget the impression which it produced on my own heart when I first read it on a Sunday, the day after its arrival, at Mr. Grant's house in John Street. We, some of us, have that very paper, which, with a little explanation and supplement, would be the best mode of sending it forth.

" But *my* idea was, and is, that you should write some religious and moral novels, stories, tales, call 'em what you will, illustrative of character and principles. The

Cheap Repository tales, a little raised in their subjects, are the very things I want; and I am persuaded, if you would thus give your aid, and I join mine, (which I will if you will agree to furnish your complement,) we might at once greatly raise the character and increase the utility of the work. The truth is, it is heavy, and it will be heavy from the very nature of the case. If it be not enlivened it will sink, and you will hereafter regret that you refused to lend a helping hand to keep it above water. Do therefore think of what I say, and fall to work. Notwithstanding your ill health, you have no valid excuse for not taking up the pen, because you write with such facility. I who, without any false humility, must say the very opposite of myself, will yet fall to work when I know you have agreed to contribute. You must not refuse me.

"I have just looked at the last number of the Anti-Jacobin. They are sinking fast, and already have such marks of death about them, that the Humane Society itself would scarce undertake to revive them. Every blessing attend you.

I am ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE." [68]

His Diary proceeds to notice other visits. "Venn called; kept him to dinner. Most interesting conversation; telling us many most affecting incidents about his father, displaying especially his zeal and suc-

[68] See the answer to this letter, Life of Mrs. H. More, vol. iii. p. 208.

cess in God's cause, his powers of conciliating people who were prejudiced against him. Mr. Kershaw and another going over from Halifax to laugh, Kershaw completely conquered, and to his dying day devoted to Mr. Venn. Mr. Venn's trust in Providence, and one singular interference: when all gloomy for want of means to pay the butcher, a £50 note came; from whom he never found out. At Tadcaster the minister really proposed to him to drink a glass of brandy, and when he refused, said he would do the duty himself."[69]

"Mr. Hardcastle with me—going to France to inquire, &c. with a view to the diffusion of the Bible. Assured by Fouché that he would assist them gladly. He quite arbitrary at Paris—sent for a loose gambling fellow, and threatened him with imprisonment; and when he resented it, told him that he would imprison him for six weeks, unless he was submissive, to show him that he had the power. The splendour very great in Paris in some things, but very unequal. Perhaps a room which has cost £20,000, and an immensely fine dinner, and only two or three servants to wait; valets de place, shabby fellows, being brought by every man. Buonaparte goes to the play every night, but cannot be seen in his box. Land well cultivated, and sells high. Much private society now, and universal extravagance continued from Revolution, when profuseness natural. No talk about politics, except in perfectly confidential parties.

[69] Diary.

Espionage universal, and men of all ranks employed in it. Fox said to be favourably received in Paris by the First Consul."[70] "They have dined together in great friendship. One cannot well conceive two people with fewer points of accordance. I know not whether you have kept your eye on the French West Indian proceedings, but there is scarce any thing to be found equal to them in the annals of human villany."[71] "I am instigating Fox to urge Buonaparte on the Abolition, of which probably he knows nothing, and confounds it with Emancipation."[72] "The morning slid away in writing to Fox on Abolition. Yesterday Boswell's Johnson detained me in chit-chat almost the whole evening, so my morning must pay the debt."

Another service was now before him. "I feel strongly impressed on reflection, with a persuasion that a good Abolition pamphlet is wanted, and as I do not know any body who will write it, I fear I must try my hand at it."[73] "I am afraid it would be a volume. The subject has never been discussed since 1792; since that era more than half the House of Commons is changed, and a new generation has sprung up in the world. I fear there are very few indeed, who know at all the grounds on which the subject rests. They adhere to the party, .. not all of them, alas! .. be it what it may, which they originally joined, and give a languid support, as if by prescrip-

[70] Diary, Sept. 17. [71] Letter to Lord Muncaster, Sept. 7.
[72] Diary, Sept. 11. [73] Ib. Sept. 19.

tion. All the Irish members, to a man, are wholly ignorant on the subject. I quite shrink from the task; for it would completely occupy me for three or four months, and I am pretty clear that in that time I should not satisfy myself or do justice to the cause." [74]

He could not find leisure at present for this work. "The last fortnight" (he says at the close of the recess) "has run insensibly away. My letters are an incessant toil and trouble to me. My mornings are curtailed, and I cannot compose in an afternoon or evening. Ran over lately Man of Feeling, and of the World—mischievous-principled works; part of Boswell's Johnson; Ferguson's Roman History; a little of D'Arnay's Private Life of Romans; Epistle to the Romans, with writing; newspapers take time; Bettering [of the Poor] Reports; Goldberry's French Account of Africa.

"Public events. Our government seems to have been remonstrating against Buonaparte's scandalous invasion of Swiss freedom, but the issue not yet clear. I think Buonaparte will give way in some degree, without owning it. Pitt still kindly helping Addington. Came to London and visited him at Richmond Park, just after Holwood sold. Pitt called, and spent a day and a quarter at Sir Charles Middleton's, going there to study farming. Sir Charles astonished at his wonderful sagacity, and power of combining and reasoning out. Says he is the best gentleman farmer

[74] To Rev. Thomas Gisborne, Sept. 20.

he, Sir Charles, knows, and may be the best farmer in England. Bernard and I busy together about education plan for children of lower orders."[75]

TO THOMAS BERNARD ESQ. FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

"Broomfield, Nov. 2, 1802.

"My dear Sir,

I have only received your letter this morning, and I hasten to assure you that if you prefer bringing forward the paper on Friday, I will certainly attend; and I beg you will tell me without reserve what you really wish. The truth is, that with friends I am perhaps too open, but then I depend on their being equally open with me; and unless they are so, I may not act as they would wish me, from believing that they would have expressed all their mind. I assure you, sincerely, that I am always most gratefully employed, as well as in my own judgment most usefully, when I am engaged in supporting your benevolent exertions; and I beg you will always call on me when you have occasion for me, doing me the justice, for it is no more than justice, to believe that I shall answer to your summons. Having some morning business to get through, I am very unwilling to go to town till I fix there, but if you think that measures cannot be going forward without talking the matter over, I will sacrifice a morning; for it is an entire morning's sacrifice to me to be at all in London, where I am

[75] Diary.

always in the situation of a horse in a summer day, on whom the flies settle the instant he stops.

"May it please God, long to continue to us your valuable labours, and bless you, as He has hitherto done, with the invention, the judgment, and the various powers of execution required for enabling you to discharge with effect your difficult services. Accept all this warm from the heart. And if you wish me to attend on Friday, believe me that I shall do it, please God, with great pleasure.

Yours, my dear Sir,

Ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Parliament met on the 16th of November. "We re-elected Abbot to-day without opposition, after a most characteristic speech from Sir William Scott, who moved his being replaced in the chair. Nothing could be more appropriate than his language. As I was coming out of the House, Canning accosted me, telling me that he had a violent quarrel against me; and when I stared, Nay, says he, on public grounds; and then explained that it was on account of my speech at York on my re-election, against continental connexions. I told him that certainly it was a question in which much must depend on circumstances and degrees, but that generally I was less friendly to them than many men; and that having been so ten years ago, I had not of course become less diffident of my

doctrines from the treatment we had received from our allies. From Canning's warmth you will guess a good deal, remembering that partly from constitutional temperament, partly from opposition feelings, he may carry his principles further than some other of our great political men. But I own I dread getting into a war. Above all, I am anxious that if we are to go to war at all, it may appear plainly to have been forced upon us, and not to have been resorted to as a measure of choice, as the result of closet reflection, and political calculation.

"O my dear Babington, how little is all this varied scene of things regarded as the stage on which the Supreme Being is exhibiting His attributes, and guiding all the movements, however complicated, however minute or obscure, and causing them to effect the purposes He has fore-ordained! How thankful should we be, that He has pointed out to us the means whereby, whatever may become of our temporal interests, our eternal concerns may be placed beyond the reach of danger."[76]

At the very commencement of the session, he declared his views upon our foreign policy. "Nov. 24th. Address moved. Opened debate. Spoke strongly against engaging in continental alliances as principals."[77] And again, "Spoke, having been much urged by Canning and Ryder, on continental alliances."[78] "Our national integrity and good faith

[76] To Thomas Babington Esq. Nov. 16.

[77] Diary.

[78] Ib. Dec. 9.

renders us unfit to enter on them. We cannot keep or break engagements as it suits the convenience of the moment." He went on to urge upon the government a due employment of the present time of peace. "Buonaparte," he admitted, "has doubtless much within his power, but what was quaintly said by my Lord Coke,[79] as to limitations of the power of parliament, may not unfitly be applied to him. The Almighty has placed His moral no less than His natural ordination of things beyond the reach of human interference. Is Buonaparte formidable as a military despot? He cannot also reign in the hearts of a free people, and command those ample resources, which liberty, well regulated liberty, can alone amass, or having amassed, will alone employ with spirit in its country's cause."

The part he took in these debates attracted much attention both in and out of parliament. "We hear a great deal of a famous speech of yours and Sheridan's," writes Mrs. Hannah More,[80] "so much that we regret that our economy had cut off the expense of a London paper." "You talk of my speech," he answers;[81] "whatever it was, the newspapers would have given you no idea of it. Never was any one made to talk such arrant nonsense, and on a subject too on which I wished not to have been mistated." "Dec. 11th. Bankes and I called on St. Helen's for

[79] "The House of Commons can do every thing, but make a man a woman, or a woman a man."

[80] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Dec. 23. [81] Jan. 5, 1803.

three quarters of an hour, and had much talk with him. He agreed with us on continental alliances, and war and peace. The Windhamites make a great storm about continental alliances, and force ministry to abjure our doctrine. Canning plainly condemning ministry—I defended them, and condemned 'men not measures,' which proclaimed by Canning, and strongly affirmed by Fox, who very uncivil to me." [82] He had intended to publish the substance of these speeches, but gave it up "from want of time. I regret it, because the newspapers made me talk such egregious nonsense, and I may be unjustly exposed to the charge of inconsistency. Still more,—I think it might have done some good. For, in spite of so much bitter experience, there is still a proneness in statesmen to form grand schemes of complicated policy; and there is in the people of every country a fatal facility of entering into wars, though they soon tire of them.

"I own that I more and more think that it is our true policy to cultivate our own internal resources; to gain the hearts of our people, and especially of our sailors; to economize in our expenditure, while we lighten the pressure of taxes on the lower orders, and lay them, if needful, even more heavily on the higher. Endeavours should be used also to revive and excite public spirit, for in this, as in many other cases, it is dangerous to have people in a state of cold neutrality; they must be warmly your friends, or they will be

[82] Diary.

your enemies. Above all, the interval of peace should be used as a golden period, to be diligently improved for the reformation of our morals, by training up the children of the lower orders in virtuous habits, and in dispositions friendly to the peace of society, and to the maintenance of religious and civil institutions. Hæ tibi erunt artes."[83]

The year concludes with some striking secret meditations. "How many and great corruptions does the House of Commons discover to me in myself! What love of worldly estimation, vanity, earthly-mindedness! How different should be the frame of a real Christian, who, poor in spirit, and feeling himself a stranger and a pilgrim on earth, is looking for the coming of his Lord and Saviour; who longs to be delivered from the present evil world, and to see God as He is! I know that this world is passing away, and that the favour of God, and a share in the blessings of the Redeemer's purchase, are alone worthy of the pursuit of a rational being: but alas! alas! I scarcely dare say I love God and His ways. If I have made any progress, it is in the clearer discovery of my own exceeding sinfulness and weakness. Yet I am convinced it is my own fault. Let me not acquiesce then in my sinful state, as if it were not to be escaped from. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, we may, I may, become holy. Press forward then, O my soul. Strive more vigorously. God and Christ will

[83] To Thomas Babington Esq. Dec. 29.

not refuse Their help. And may the emotions I have been now experiencing, be the gracious motions of the divine Spirit, quickening my dead heart, and bringing me from the power of Satan unto God."[84]

[84] Journal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JANUARY 1803 TO MAY 1804.

New-year's day—Finley—British transports for St. Domingo—Motion against the Slave Trade delayed by King's message on National Defence—Bible Society founded—Visit to Wilderness Park—Wilberforce opposes the renewal of war—Weakness of ministers—Volunteers—York meeting—Bath Easton—Fast day—Remarkable escape—State of parties at the meeting of parliament—Christmas recess—Breach between Pitt and Addington—Pitt's motion on naval inquiry—Sunday drilling—Political negociations—Pitt comes into office.

THE new year began with his receiving the Holy Communion, and forming vows of more devoted service. "I will press forward and labour to know God better, and love Him more—assuredly I may, because God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, and the Holy Ghost will shed abroad the love of God in the heart. Oh then pray—pray—be earnest—press forward and follow on to know the Lord. Without watchfulness, humiliation, and prayer, the sense of Divine things must languish, as much as the grass withers for want of refreshing rains and dews. The word of God and the lives of good

men give us reason to believe, that without these there can be no lively exercise of Christian graces. Trifle not then, O my soul, with thy immortal interests. Heaven is not to be won without labour. Oh then press forward: whatever else is neglected, let this one thing needful be attended to; then will God bless thee. I will try to retire at nine or half-past, and every evening give half an hour, or an hour, to secret exercises, endeavouring to raise my mind more, and that it may be more warmed with heavenly fire. Help me, O Lord—without Thee I can do nothing. Let me strive to maintain a uniform frame of gratitude, veneration, love, and humility, not unelevated with holy confidence, and trembling hope in the mercies of that God, whose ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. I should almost despair of myself, but for His promises. Strive, O my soul, to maintain and keep alive impressions, first, of the constant presence of a holy, omniscient, omnipotent, but infinitely merciful and gracious God, of Christ our Almighty Shepherd, of the Holy Spirit, of the evil one, and the invisible world in general. Secondly, of the real nature and malignity of sin, as a holy curb on my inclinations, which will check me and keep me from evil. Thirdly, of my own vileness and unprofitableness. And to these let me add a fourth, a sense of the multiplied blessings of my situation. Surely never cup was so full. Oh that I were more thankful! My ingratitude should humble

me in the dust."[1] He was spending this vacation at Broomfield, though often called to London by the claims of charity and business.

"Reading Annual Register, History, and Gil Blas very hastily. Letters innumerable. Correcting Henry Thornton's, and revising other papers for the Christian Observer. Much occupied in D.'s affairs. Satisfied myself that he has no bad meaning—a lesson to be moderate and candid on the one hand, for how sure was S. that he must have had roguish intentions! and to be careful not to give needless offence on the other, which D. has eminently done. Tired and harassed with this matter—I am grieved at the idea of hurting him, yet should be sorry to lose £4000 and waste such means of usefulness through false delicacy. I commit the matter to Cardale, and write to tell D. so, believing it to be the most likely way of preventing a breach between us in the long run, though I fear that an attorney is to a poor fellow in his situation much what a cat is to a mouse, or a weasel to a rabbit. I am sure I feel for him though I seem to speak lightly."[2] On another such occasion shortly afterwards he writes to consult Mr. Stephen, adding, "if there be more than five words necessary to be said on it do not plague yourself with it now, unless it may be material to Mrs. S.'s interest; she, as a widow and near relation, claims doubly my best aid. I want you to have your country run undisturbed, and do not give you credit for the same innate love of law which

[1] Journal, Jan. 2. [2] Diary, Jan. 1.

made Lord Kenyon bring some cases to be answered, as another man would crack walnuts, when he was sitting tête-à-tête with Lady Kenyon after supper. It is a shame to get so much law gratis; especially as yours is better than gratuitous law has the character of being."

"Jan. 3rd. Addington called and spent an hour—I told him of Stamp Office frauds, and peace or war, &c. 6th. Mr. Neild dined with me about prisons—a tour of 1700 miles for that sole end." 16th. "Simeon dined: interesting conversation—gives a melancholy account of the enthusiasm of the people in South Wales. In Scotland the ministers hampered by their General Assembly politics. He was kindly received by all. The Bishop of Ely very civil to him, and reproved an attempt to fling out at him. Lord Teignmouth dined —much talk with him about Lord Cornwallis's statue inscription. Wrote a long letter to poor Finley. 20th. Vaccine meeting. Afterwards an interview with poor Finley in Newgate—very affecting—shocked at Newgate and its inhabitants."

This impression was, no doubt, increased by his having been too constantly employed of late to continue his early custom of visiting our prisons. This case had been brought casually before him. It was one of great affliction. Finley was an officer in the army, the son of a clergyman whose venerable widow still survived. "He had been patronized," Mr. Wilberforce writes to Mr. Babington, "by the Marquis of Buckingham, Windham, and others;

and being dissipated and profuse beyond his means, is now under sentence of death for forgery, and sure to suffer. I heard of him through his wife, a poor Scotch girl, young and handsome, whom he had brought out of the north, and who has not a friend or an acquaintance in London, while, poor soul, she has a sucking child at the breast. I heard some things of the man which made me entertain an indifferent opinion of him, and was averse to sending any clergyman to him; but my dear wife prevailed on me to do it, and I put Doddridge's Rise and Progress into his hands, and Crowther[3] undertook to visit him. To be short, we trust it has pleased God to bless the means which we have used, and that the poor man is a true convert. Providentially he has had far more time than usual for preparation, and, as he remarked himself when I was with him the other day, he has enjoyed much more space and leisure for religious consideration than if he had been lying on a sick-bed. His venerable mother, a most pleasing old woman above fourscore, told me with tears, that she was indebted to me beyond what language could express for having been the instrument of her son's happy change."

Finley was executed upon the 8th of February.—"My note written to Crowther with a message to him, consoled and cheered him. Crowther came to dine. Delighted with his account of Finley's latter

[3] Rev. Samuel Crowther, Vicar of Christ's Church, Newgate.

days—his deep humility and his soundness."[4] What he witnessed in this instance strengthened his disapprobation of the usual haste with which execution is made to follow sentence. He had once intended to bring the matter before parliament, and gave it up only from the fear of inflicting a useless injury upon religion, by provoking an unsuitable discussion. "To bring forward," was his answer when it was pressed upon him, "such a motion would lead to much profane ribaldry, and no good result. You could only argue it on grounds to which the great mass of members are altogether strangers." No man with a bolder maintenance of truth united a nicer sense of the reverence due to holy things; and he would not needlessly expose the sanctuary to the hard gaze of coarse and careless spirits. He had studied carefully his audience, and would reprove the low tone of doctrine which he sometimes heard from the pulpit by remarking, "I could say as much as that in the House of Commons."

He was still at Broomfield; and whilst even there, his time fled so "inconceivably fast that, though" he was "never idle," he knew not how to find leisure for "a pamphlet he longed to write upon the Slave business before the Abolition question comes on;"[5] yet "he shrank back" still more "from the approaching bustle and turmoil of the great city. Certainly the quiet of a country life is most congenial with all our

[4] Diary, Jan. 8. [5] Ib. Jan. 27.

best dispositions. Our blessed Saviour, however, mixed in the busy haunts of men. May I be enabled to do it more in His spirit—not slothful in business, but serving the Lord; and not solicitous about the favour or the praises of men."[6]

On the third of February parliament reassembled, and he returned to active duty. "House of Commons — dined Stephen's. Busy about our helping Buonaparte with ships for St. Domingo" to re-establish slavery.

"Would that, as you desire," he writes to Mr. Stephen,[8] "I could give myself wholly to this business. But it is impossible. I have had a deputation of clothiers with me for two hours almost, while your messenger has been waiting. If you can help me with good proof that the act we deprecate is contrary to the law of nations, I shall be most thankful for it. But the House adopts so implicitly the maxim, Cuilibet in arte sua, &c. that all my assertions would weigh not a feather against Sir William Grant's ipse dixit, or Sir William Scott's pausing. If one could get an answer from a civilian of note, declaring the transaction illegal, the showing it to the merchants might deter them."

"I am vexed with Addington," he says a week later,[9] "who does nothing decisive, though I have told him of great abuses in one of the public offices. Then he half-defended the merchants for helping

[6] Letter from W. Wilberforce to Thomas Babington Esq. Jan. 31.
[7] Diary, Feb. 3 [8] Feb. 4. [9] Diary, Feb. 12.

Buonaparte with ships for transports, which most monstrous. Stephen very earnest. Grenville called on me about it, and Pitt reprobating it. Pitt not yet come up. I suspect not very friendly to Addington just now. Fox did not seem to feel the enormity of our helping Buonaparte as he ought. I wrote to him about it. Hardcastle had an offer for two ships. Cruelties and perfidy in St. Domingo utterly horrible. Stephen's predictions fully verified."

"How shall I tell you," he writes to Mr. Babington,[10] "that I have ascertained that the French government have actually engaged some English ships to carry over troops and stores to St. Domingo; whether to serve also as stiflers and drowners I know not. It is a crime which I believe will bring its punishment along with it in the injury it will do our sailors, and in the effect it will probably produce in causing the blacks of St. Domingo to regard us as their enemies . . . those very blacks, with whom we made a treaty, which was never annulled, and to which the security of Jamaica for two or three years was owing; and many of them the same individuals who served faithfully in our army, and to whom we had engaged to give their liberty at the end of a few years. You know, I believe, that we marched 12,000 of these troops to Toussaint, when we evacuated the island." Nothing but the renewal of hostilities with France saved us from this guilty undertaking.

He was just about to bring on the Abolition ques-

[10] March 4.

tion, when he was seized, he tells Mr. Babington who was then resident in Madeira, "with a certain illness which is going through all London, called from its generality the influenza, and by the learned, as I hear, grippe, (Française,) under a notion of its being brought from Paris, where it raged previously with great violence. It is attended with great temporary prostration of strength, fever, attacks in the head, bowels, and lungs. I conceive it is this complaint under which I have laboured, for I am only now recovering, I thank God, after a more serious illness than I have had for many years. But this, as well as every other dispensation, has furnished abundant matter for thankfulness. I suffered no pain worth speaking of; I had every possible comfort; my mind was in a very tranquil, comfortable state, and the Dean of Carlisle *happened*, as we speak, to be upon the point of coming up, and was an unspeakable comfort to my wife." The complaint ran through his family, and long threatened fatal consequences to his eldest daughter.

Whilst he was still confined at home "a message from the King announced the necessity of immediate military preparations."[11] Silent leges inter arma: and for the remainder of the year threatenings of invasion and provision for defence engrossed the minds of all.

"Your heart would ache," he writes upon the 22nd of March to Mr. Babington, "could I unload to you my budget and make you a partaker of my political

[11] Diary, March 8.

grievances. The premier is a man of sense, of a generous mind, of pure and upright intentions, and of more religion than almost any other politician. But alas, he has sadly disappointed me; I trusted he would correct abuses, but in vain have I endeavoured to spirit him up even when convinced of their reality. Just now, when I expected I should hear of the members of a particular Board, that they were about to be hanged, or (as I am writing to a sober matter-of-fact man) more literally, that they were turned out with disgrace, I have heard that they are going to have £200 per annum each added to their salaries. In almost every department, but most in the different branches of the naval, there has been sad mismanagement. Then my poor slaves! This King's message which came down before I had returned to the House after my illness, (by which I was attacked almost immediately after my arrival in London,) has made it improper to bring forward my intended motion. You can conceive what would be said by Lord Hawkesbury & Co. if I were to propose the Abolition now, when the whole attention of government is justly called to the state of the country. How should I be invoked to delay the discussion at least till a more convenient season! I don't think that with such plausible objections, so smoothly pressed as they would be by some whom you will guess without my naming them, we should have above thirty or forty supporters, and all the Irish members headed by Lord Castlereagh would be pledged against us for the time to come.

And all this time the wicked abominations of the Slave Trade are going on in a greater degree than ever.

"Let me tell you, while I think of it, that the accounts you will see in the newspapers of Buonaparte's violent language and demeanour towards Lord Whitworth at Madame Buonaparte's drawing-room, are substantially true. He spoke loud enough to be heard by two hundred people, and his countenance was perfectly distorted with passion. I am grieved to tell you, from the concurrent testimony of several well-informed persons who have lately been in France, that there exists pretty generally a rooted hatred of Great Britain. It is conceived that the war must have ended much sooner but for us. Envy, jealousy, vanity, all conspire to foment this spirit of hostility. How shocking this! my heart is heavy when I think of it. May you and I be enabled to live more and more above this world, and habitually to have our conversation, our citizenship in heaven."

"I have been much engrossed lately by conversation with Milner, and several public meetings, and notes and letters; yet too little done, alas! Gambier's paper—got an interview between Addington and him on Admiralty and dock yards' state. Peace and war still uncertain. During my illness I read Hayley's Life of Cowper—now Edinburgh Review. George Eyre dined, and long talk about Paris, whence he just come—all military—great inveteracy against England—unequalled greatness of

French gallery—innumerable gambling houses."[12] "Colpoys at breakfast. Lord Mayor on business—asking him to move Sunday Bill. I have not attended the House, salutis causâ, and there has been nothing material to do. The state of the navy, the cruel, unlawful, and oppressive treatment of the sailors, saddens my heart. I am disappointed with Addington. G. Berkeley seems disposed to bring the matter forward."[13] "The idea of the navy corruptions and abuses prevails more and more. I told Canning that if Addington would not reform them I would not be backward to join in the House in applying the remedy. Pitt's return talked of and wished."[14] "Two days ago I wrote a serious letter to Addington on naval and other mismanagement, which kindly received and answered. Peace and war still undecided."[15]

All eyes were turned anxiously to this great question, as the hope of preserving peace became evidently weaker every day. It was at this very time, amidst the din of warlike preparation, that the foundation-stone was laid of an institution which was to leaven all nations with the principles of peace. The great difficulty of obtaining Bibles for home, and still more foreign, circulation, had for some years been a matter of unavailing complaint. A new scheme to effect this purpose was now in agitation. The designers of the new society proposed to combine for this common object the scattered energies of all professing

[12] Diary, March 19.
[13] Diary, April 3. [14] Ib. 8. [15] Ib. 17.

Christians; and so to create a mighty instrument for the circulation of the truth. Mr. Wilberforce had secretly done much in this very work;[16] and the catholic aspect worn by this new society delighted his large and liberal mind. He was accordingly one of its first framers. "Hughes, Reyner, and Grant breakfasted with me," says his Diary,[17] "on Bible Society formation." And a few days later, "city—Bible Society proposal." Here, as he would often mention, "a few of us met together at Mr. Hardcastle's counting-house, at a later hour than suited city habits, out of a regard to my convenience, and yet on so dark a morning that we discussed by candle-light, while we resolved upon the establishment of the Bible Society."

Little did it promise, when thus planted as 'the smallest of seeds,' to grow to such a goodly stature amongst the trees of the forest. This is not the place to scrutinize its constitution. The good that it has effected has been great beyond the utmost expectation of its founders, both in the circulation of the word of God, and in awakening the zeal of a careless generation. The evil which has waited on this good, has been incidental in its character, and confined, perhaps almost entirely, to the public meetings. Nor should those who view it in its consequences, forget the different position of its founders. Mr. Wilber-

[16] Thus the clergy of East Farleigh and some surrounding parishes, to take one out of many instances, appear to have been supplied many years ago with Bibles by his private charity.

[17] April 5.

force saw no danger to the Church from the co-operation of Dissenters, who at that time professed an affectionate regard for the national establishment. Bishops Porteus and Barrington, who had supported his efforts for enforcing the King's proclamation, readily joined with him here; and by no other machinery could the result have been obtained. So great was the torpor of the Church, that all more strictly regular exertions had absolutely failed,[18] and they who devised this powerful instrument of good, are hardly to be blamed, though they have with a holy daring called up a spirit too mighty for their absolute control.

A letter to Lord Muncaster, written during the Easter holidays, is a lively picture of these anxious times.

"London, April 16, 1803.

"My dear Muncaster,

I flatter myself that you will be ready to abuse me for not writing to you this week, when a little recess from parliamentary business would of course leave me more leisure for the service of my friends. I really did intend paying off all my epistolary debts, but somehow or other, the week has rolled away insensibly, and never do I remember less done in it. My bodily state has in part made me inefficient. There is certainly a *something* which is very peculiar,

[18] The Principality had for years vainly begged for Bibles, which the limited funds of the Venerable Society had made it unable to bestow upon them.

even stout people feel it; with a blazing sun there is a rawness which is not dulcified, just as you sometimes find an acid which no sugar will overpower.

"We are just returned to Palace Yard, to spend Sunday in quiet with our children, having been visiting at Henry Thornton's and Lord Teignmouth's. Not having seen any one since my return, I have no news to tell you. There certainly has been a negociation with Pitt, in which his return to power, and that of some others of his ministry, has been in question. Whether it is over, or if over, what is the issue of it, I know not. There is one view in which it is honourable to Pitt to be called out of retirement in the time of difficulty and danger.

> 'The gleamings of peace should new tempests deform,
> The regret of the good, and the fears of the wise,
> Shall turn to the pilot that weathered the storm.'

Yet in another view I like it not. It will associate the ideas of Pitt and war together as much as those of Fleury and peace—a far more desirable combination. The lower orders to a man will be likely to feel this, and you will anticipate the use which will be made of it by Fox and his partisans.

"I hinted to you that I feared there was too much cause for the reports in circulation of the gross mismanagement of our navy. Do you see that abusive fellow, Cobbett? He is too low, and bitter, and indiscriminate; but his paper is often worth reading. His charges against the Admiralty are precise, and if they can be verified,

no punishment can be too great for the delinquency. All from whom I have heard are in the same story. I own I feel more than all the rest what I fear has taken place, that just and grievous matter of offence has been given to the sailors. What a disappointment to me, who had reason to expect from Addington's language a year and more ago that some grievances which had long existed should be done away, and now ships have been sent to sea with two, three, and four years' pay due to them, directly contrary to Act of Parliament. If we hear of a general mutiny in the West Indies it will not be at all wonderful. From what I hear, this subject, if war does not take place, will be brought forward in parliament. How the negociations will end no one can guess. There is something quite unaccountable in the orders and counter-orders about evacuating the Cape of Good Hope.

"O my dear friend, I wish I were out of the bustle. How ardently do I pant for the shade! If I durst carve for myself I would not continue a week longer in harness. But I am ashamed, overflowing as my cup is with blessings, to say any thing which implies dissatisfaction with my condition. Never had man more cause for thankfulness, and I ought to be more actively grateful than I am.

"Farewell, my dear friend. With kind remembrances to Lady M.,

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The tone in which this letter closes is preserved in his Diary, when three days later, "Lord Bathurst called and told" him "about the negociation between Pitt and Addington." "What a worldly spirit did this conversation create in me, from the consciousness of being the depositary of secrets! Yet my better judgment resists these emotions, and suggests to me that these things are low compared with a Christian's objects. I find reason to thank God for my marriage, which, by shutting me out more from the world, has tended to keep me from its infection. Oh may my conversation be in heaven! In the same spirit, he says a few days later, when he was "much pressed by Lord Camden and Pitt to go to Wilderness, Lord Camden's, to meet Pitt, and hear the account of the late negociation. I have consented. I hope it is right. Oh let me beware, lest I grow fond of the world. I am going into a trying scene; may I be so strengthened as to come out unhurt. O Lord, quicken me; fill me with heavenly-mindedness, and peace, and joy."[19]

"Set off on the 25th, about half-past two, to Wilderness with Lord Camden, in his chaise. To Long's, Bromley Hill. There found Pitt. Saw the place, sweetly pretty, and with Pitt tête-à-tête, to Wilderness. Heard the complete story of the late negociation with Addington—his plan of defending the country, if war. His mind of the same superior cast. Did not get to dinner till almost eight

[19] Diary, April 21.

o'clock. William Long, Lord Camden, Pitt, and I, chatted till bed-time, half-past twelve.[20] Tuesday. After breakfast long discussion with Pitt. Talked about navy's state, as day before. Then read loungingly, and walked out. I fear the morning was too much wasted, and grieved on reflection that I had not talked at all to Pitt on Abolition, though I deliberately think it would have done no good. I fear my frame of mind is not quite what it ought to be; for though my spirits are often low in the society of these friends, yet I do not feel enough a lively and tender concern for their spiritual state. O Lord, make me more transformed into Thine image."[21]

The following day brought him back to London, and a host of occupations. On the Saturday evening, he speaks of "combating his dulness by prayer and meditation, in order to fit myself for to-morrow, especially as I have had so little time for religious offices this week. I have found evil from not trying to improve Saturday evenings, and to be earlier on Sunday mornings for God. I must endeavour D. G. to mend here."[22] This labour was not thrown away. "O blessed day," he says on Sunday, "which allows us a precious interval wherein to pause, to come out from the thickets [the bush] of worldly concerns, and to give ourselves up to heavenly and spiritual objects. And oh what language can do justice to the emotions of gratitude which ought to fill my heart, when I consider how few of my fellows know and feel its value

[20] Diary, April 26. [21] Ib. April 27. [22] Journal, May 1.

and proper uses? Oh the infinite goodness and mercy of my God and Saviour!"

Every eye was now fixed upon the dangers of the country. An army of 500,000 veterans, flushed with victory and imbittered by former disappointments, lay just across the Channel, ready to invade its shores. He was giving a "dinner to King, the American minister, on his taking leave, when Henry Thornton came over with the sad tidings of Addington's having declared in his place, that Andreossi had asked for a passport, that Lord Whitworth returning, in short, that war. The news had the effect on the sudden of making me feel a sort of intoxicating flush, though my judgment so deeply deplores it.[23] 7th. Morning, on opening the Bible, after praying to God for guidance and protection, I accidentally just glanced my eye on Jeremiah xxxix. 16—18.[24] Oh that I may have God for a refuge, and then it matters not what befalls me. I would not lay much stress on such incidents, because we are not warranted so to do by the word of God, but it seemed fit to be noticed and recorded."

His Journal during this year is more than usually full of the secret workings of his mind. "What a mystery of iniquity," he says, "is the human heart! How forcibly do thoughts of worldly pursuits intrude into the mind during the devotional exercises, and how obstinately do they maintain their place, and when excluded, how incessantly do they renew their at-

[23] Diary, May 6.

[24] "Go and speak to Ebed-melech," &c.

tacks!—which yet the moment our devotional exercises are over, fly away of themselves. To-day the Slave Trade thus harassed me."[25] And on a following Sunday—"I have been at prayer, and I hope with some fervency of desire for the blessings for which I prayed; but alas, my worldly mind! Surely it is the temptation of the evil spirit. Having called for the first time at Grant's on the way from church, and having talked quite at random of my probably taking a house near him with a back door to Museum Gardens, my mind keeps running on it; it absolutely haunts me, and will recur do all I can. Oh may Christ by His Spirit give me that self-possession and sobriety of mind, that low estimate of temporal things, that strong impression of their uncertainty and transitoriness, that I may not be thus at the mercy, the mere sport of my imagination. In these times especially (yesterday the news of Lord Whitworth's leaving Paris, and consequent expectation of war) I should be weaned from this world, and be as one who is here a stranger and a pilgrim."[26]

"May 17th. There are those who still expect peace. Lord Malmesbury told Acier so, merely from speculating on the character of the man. St. Andrew St. John told me that Lord Whitworth was enraged, though they would probably stop his mouth. That Talleyrand, &c. say our government never fairly gave them in writing any ultimatum, any statement of our terms. Fox had a communication

[25] Journal, April 15. [26] Ib. May 15.

lately from Talleyrand to this effect. The generals, they say, are sanguine in their idea of invading England; that Talleyrand has played deep in our funds. Fox came up to me on the ministerial side to-day in the House, but Attorney-General Perceval there, so he could say nothing, but I suspect he meant to begin on the war."[27]

The next day he "read the papers concerning the rupture with France on his way to Broomfield;"[28] and found himself reluctantly compelled on the following Monday to oppose the government. "Lord Teignmouth came after breakfast to talk politics. He and I had taken exactly the same view of the state of affairs; thinking our government had improperly asked to retain Malta, and that they ought to have offered to acquiesce in any arrangement for making it independent. Read the papers, and talked, and considered. House till half-past twelve. Spoke late, and House very impatient, being against their opinions."[29] "Malta," he said, "is indeed a valuable possession, but the most valuable of all the possessions of this country is its good faith. It is a possession which, above all others, we should watch with jealous circumspection, and guard from the very suspicion of infringement. This then is my grand objection to the conduct of ministers, that by claiming the possession of Malta, instead of its independence, they took ground which was barely tenable;

[27] Diary. [28] Ib. May 18.
[29] Ib. April 23.

they gave our inveterate enemy an opportunity of mistating our real views both to France and to Europe." The debate was renewed the following day. "House till four in the morning. Divided in minority of 67 against 398. Henry Thornton, Bankes, and I agreed. Fox spoke three hours with wonderful ability, as Pitt last night, in quite different style, for an hour or more, appealing to national pride, honour, &c." [30]

To this appeal he had himself replied in the conclusion of his speech. "I have not descanted on the evils of war, and endeavoured to affect your passions by turning your minds to the contemplation of its various horrors; not but that I think a very unjust outcry is raised against all those who touch on those topics, whilst appeals to pride, to glory, to the reputation of our brave forefathers, are heard with delight and clamorously applauded. It might tend, sir, to the discovery of the path of truth and wisdom, if appeals to the passions were in all cases to be excluded from our discussions, and if we were to confine ourselves to a dry, cold, strict, logical investigation and analysis. But if we allow of appeals to those passions, the influence of which on persons in our rank of life must be particularly strong, surely we should not so squeamishly reject every appeal to those feelings of our nature, which teach us to sympathize with the widow and the orphan, and to deplore the various sufferings of

[30] Diary, May 24.

which war is, above all other calamities, the sure and prolific source."

He felt deeply upon this subject, and published his speech. He was far from thinking with Mr. Pitt,[31] that administration had been too slow in their appeal to arms. The great benefit indeed, as he maintained, which had followed from the peace of Amiens, was not the temporary respite it afforded to our burdens, but that it showed the infinite ambition of our enemy, and so proved the necessity of war. To secure this end effectually, Buonaparte must be shown to be clearly the aggressor. "Surely, if we are forced into war again, our people will engage in it with more spirit because they see their rulers unwilling to subject them to its evils."[32] This was in some degree prevented by the conduct of our government; still it was in a great measure attained. The nation, which in 1800 was so weary of the war that nothing could have induced it to continue its exertions, awoke like a giant refreshed after its two years' repose, and never turned back its hand till the hour of victory. "It may be necessary to make peace," wrote Dr. Milner to Mr. Wilberforce whilst the negociations were depending, "in order that the nation may be convinced that peace cannot be had. This is just what happened when you brought on the negociations at Lisle by

[31] His publisher, taking for granted that Mr. Pitt and his friend must have agreed, was on the point of including in one advertisement his speech and that of Mr. Pitt, to which it was an answer. He was but just in time to prevent this ridiculous mistake.

[32] MS. notes of Speech.

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your motion in 1795. The eyes of England were opened, and they bore the war better afterwards."

His Diary at this time is full of interesting notes. "May 22nd, Sunday. Lock—charity sermon—Dr. Hawker—excessively filled—very offensive in familiarity in his prayer; and in his sermon the slang of experience; such a sermon as would have pleased a hundred and sixty years ago. 27th. Fox's motion about Russia, withdrawn on Lord Hawkesbury's concession. Fox very civil to me. Perceval in earnest on Sir William Scott's Bill; yet almost all agree in wishing the bishops to be absolute in authority. 28th. Lord Teignmouth at breakfast. Sir William Jones's monument inscription. Heard Erskine's account of his visit to La Harpe; and latter's conversation; and Emperor Alexander's (of Russia) letter. Dined Grant's—Master of the Rolls, Mackintosh, (infinitely entertaining,) M. Montagu, Mr. Horner, (a man of extraordinary talents, and a writer in the Edinburgh Review,) and others. Staid till half-past ten, and came away unwillingly to Broomfield. Mackintosh telling us an infinity of anecdotes of French, when he over. Tallien above all (in cruelty). Poor Danton. 'C'étoit un bon enfant.' Barrère affected to talk sentiment. Tallien called a spade a spade. Tallien universally shunned. He said of Louis XVI. 'Cependant il n'avoit pas peur pour lui-même, mais il parloit du sang de son peuple, le miserable.' La Harpe educated Emperor Alexander, who keeps up a close correspondence with him, and proposes to learn of him." Mack-

intosh was a few days afterwards a guest at his own house; and a friend who was of the party particularly notices the skill with which he directed the conversation towards those veins of thought in which he knew his guest to be the richest. He himself complains, that though "Mackintosh was very entertaining, yet I got little on the subject I wanted—causes and preventatives of the decline of nations."

On the 2nd of June Mr. Canning communicated to him the resolutions of censure upon ministers for having so long submitted to the overbearing conduct of France, which were moved by Colonel Patten on the following day. He describes the debate. "Small speakers for a long time, till at length Tom Grenville; then Addington and Pitt. Previous question, for which I voted, 56 against 333; then Pitt and his friends went away; I staid and voted against the motion."[33] "Last night discovered more of the influence of the Crown than most incidents of late days; also more right principle, for people don't like to vote against Pitt, yet only 56 with him. He indicated that only restrained by decency towards Crown, and present state of the King, from moving for dismission.[34] 6th. Pitt strongly urged a decisive measure of military preparation to-day. Windham showed himself a most dangerous adviser. 8th. I heard it rumoured that government meant to tax the funds. This said to be Tierney's plan. Pitt decidedly against it. It would surely ruin public credit.

[33] Diary. [34] Ib. June 4.

Tierney made treasurer of the navy. 13th. House. Budget. I had heard of great objections to taxing the funds. This is done by the present plan to 5 per cent., yet no objection was urged."

The palmy days of Addington's ministry were past, and the difficulties of the war soon displayed its inherent feebleness. "Our military preparations," Mr. Wilberforce tells Mr. Bankes,[35] "appear very tardy. We had an interesting debate yesterday.[36] Pitt, as usual, showed the thorough consideration he had given to the whole subject, but (perhaps as usual) overstated the advantages to be derived from the plan, which on the whole was to be approved. He is, or rather has been, but indifferent in health. It would be sufficiently pleasant, if it were not so serious a concern as to excite feelings of a more indignant kind, to hear (as we did last night) Windham, &c. declaring again and again, that defensive war must to us be ruin, when we reflect on their unceasing clamours for war under circumstances in which we could have no adequate means of offensive operation." Every day supplied fresh proofs of the weakness of the government. "July 4th. People already begin to sicken of the war. I see secret discontents and fears, but no one speaks openly. The citizens outrageous against Addington's incapacity, as they call it. Against taxing the funds."[37] This plan was speedily abandoned. On the 13th he says, "Addington gave

[35] June 24, [36] On the second reading of the Army Reserve Bill.
[37] Diary, July 4.

up his inequality as to land and funds, on which we had divided with Pitt, 50 to 150."[38] The following day he writes to Lord Muncaster.

"London, July 14, 1803.

"My dear Muncaster,

It is really singular how exactly consonant to the sentiments which I had been enforcing in private on Addington, Hawkesbury, Charles Yorke, &c. last night, are those contained in your letter just now received and lying before me. I have been again and again urging government to open their eyes to the real situation of the country, and to the new energies which the present exigence should make them call forth; but they maintain, Addington especially, that the spirit of the country is as much up as he wishes it, &c. though my lette s, and conversations with a variety of people, enforce on me as well as you the opposite conclusion. We exactly agree, I repeat it—'tis as if your country, which always you know abounded in echoes, had echoed back to me the feelings, which with a loud voice I had poured forth to my friend in Eskdale.

"I am sure you would approve of my advice to Addington, that he and the rest of the ministers should have a list formed of all men in London, from the first duke to the lowest tradesman, who has any considerable following; ship-builders, rope-makers, brewers, cabinet-makers, ironmongers, &c. &c.: that applica-

[38] Diary, July 13.

tions should in private be made to them all, through the means of persons having influence over them, explaining to them their danger, their interest, their duty, and the service they might render by stepping forth with a declaration of their readiness to exert all their influence and authority, in calling forth the utmost energies of their country. Then the King should come to the House of Lords and make a suitable speech, and a general meeting be held of all the persons of influence above mentioned; the nobility, with the Prince of Wales at their head, should agree to make all their servants learn the use of arms, and, mixed with others of their several parishes, form companies; and all the eminent traders should engage for the exertions they could severally make. This would enable us to obtain from London 100,000 men at least; and still more, it would give an electric shock to the whole kingdom, and every other great town would imitate the example; and the nation would cheerfully anticipate the call of government to arm in their own defence. *Now*, without taking these methods to warm and rouse, they are about to bring forward a Bill to enrol all the population of the kingdom between sixteen and sixty. This I fear, if compelled by parliamentary authority, unaided by influence, will be sulkily obeyed. As it is, all the militia force is drawn and drawing from the north towards the south—Hull left absolutely defenceless; and this is necessary. But then should not London arm in its own defence? I feel all you say of the danger of a

smaller force landing in the north, while the main attack is made in the south; though I think they will scarce venture so long a sea voyage as from the Elbe either.

"My dear Muncaster, you and I disagree about the ground and policy of the war, but I am sure you would have said, if you had foreseen how languid the government would have been in such trying circumstances, that we had better not have ventured so bold a line of conduct. Pitt has been privately pressing them to call forth the voluntary irregular force of the country, and the measures, again put off, and to be brought forward on Monday, would not have been even now produced, but for him. He showed Yorke all his clauses a fortnight ago. I sometimes think I ought to go to Yorkshire this summer as my proper post. But then again when I call to mind my weakly body, that I often cannot walk half a mile, never can ride one, that I must have my meals and sleep with perfect regularity, that I cannot bear a drop of rain, &c. I am afraid of getting into circumstances in which people, seeing me in good spirits and able to talk, but not knowing my bodily infirmities, might attribute my inactivity to cowardice and lukewarmness; and I might disgrace myself, and damp the exertions of others. Why should you not write to Addington yourself to open his eyes to the real state of the public mind, and to the necessity of spirited measures, &c. Farewell. Kind remembrances.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The state of public business led to a protracted session. "July 15th. House—Income Tax Bill—long debate on leaving out poor rate and tithe, in estimating tenants' income—strange dulness of opponents—divided but 24 against 95—late. 16th. Doubted, but returned home to Broomfield. Lord St. Helen's, Teignmouth, Henry Thornton, dined. Much talk about invasion. All people seem to think our sea-guard not to be depended on. Many say that now in the calms of summer, the enemy will row over before we are prepared. I cannot myself expect it at present. Yet we are strangely unprepared, and the confusion might be extreme if the French should come." [39]

The excitement of these stirring times caused no relaxation of that careful scrutiny with which he tried his temper and his conduct. "I have not been considerate," he says, "or kind enough towards Addington. Poor fellow, what annoyances has he! He has no peace as I have, alas!" And again, "July 17th. I fear I did not act honestly in persuading myself that I might neglect the House of Commons yesterday for Lord St. Helen's, whom I had asked to dinner. It is dangerous to act contrary to conscience, in little things as well as great. It is tempting God to withdraw His Holy Spirit. That way of persuading ourselves, which we are apt to practise, when inclined to a thing which the first simple suggestion of conscience opposes, is to be carefully watched against. Yet we seem not to be deceived

[39] Diary.

either, but to see as it were out of the corner of our eye the right all the while."[40]

It was no light excuse which ever led him to absent himself from parliament. Three days after this last entry, he says,[41] "To town, meaning Levee, but so poorly that I gave it up. House. Defence Bill till late. Alas, Sunday drilling introduced contrary to Yorke's declaration, from his being put out of sorts about another clause. I spoke. Pitt answered me." He never ceased to oppose this injurious practice until he succeeded in preventing it. He was busy also in urging government to greater energy of action. "Sir Charles Middleton sent me a plan for defence; getting immediately one hundred large coppered ships, East Indians, West Indians, colliers, &c. with large carronades, and employing them to run down the flotilla. I showed it to Pitt, and gave it to Addington. Both approved. Saw it afterwards at Lord Hobart's, where Sullivan said that he had hit upon the same. The most knowing expect an attempt at invasion, but 'tis strange how little idea they have, or even government seems to have, of the time when, and whether now or not. Buonaparte said to have attacked Hanover personally to vex the King. Addington says he bears it well. Said his determination was taken, and hinted he'd take the field if it came to that. Sir William Scott told me that the farmers in Oxfordshire said that they were so heavily taxed that if Buonaparte did come they

[40] Journal. [41] Diary

could not be worse; and at Battersea Henry Thornton reported sad things of the state of mind of the lower classes. From Rothley, again, they say if the Squire turns out they will all go with him. We got the Bill mended though not cured about Sunday exercising. How different the House of Commons from the kingdom! No one seemed to care about it there except Thorntons, &c. Well may we call down God's vengeance. Pitt spoke of it as not contrary to English Church principles. Cobbett extremely abusive about it. All agree we are not ready for the French yet. All the regiments are marched from Hull towards London. If we are not attacked for three months, people seem to think we shall be impregnable. Alas, too haughty and self-sufficient, and Pitt rampant about setting Europe to rights, &c. after vindicating our own safety. Pitt does more in some ways than he would in power, from the deference to colleagues he would then feel. Supported Crawford, and discovered great military genius. His speech capital—urging precautions yet animating."[42] This was the very tone he himself held. "I strongly opposed this war," he wrote many years afterwards,[43] "differing from those with whom I commonly agreed, at a great cost of private feeling; but when once it had begun, I did not persist in declaiming against its impolicy and mischiefs, because I knew that by so doing I should only injure my country."

[42] Diary, July 26. [43] To Joseph Butterworth Esq. July 29, 1812.

No one saw with more regret the strange inertness of the government. His long and tried friendship for Mr. Addington made it the more painful to him, and he did all he could by personal remonstrance to stir him up to greater energy of conduct. He exerted himself to kindle a proper ardour in the country; and for this purpose he determined upon travelling into Yorkshire, to be present at a public meeting for voting an address. Upon the 26th of July he set out from London, and leaving his family at Wood Hall, in Hertfordshire, he pushed on to York, which he reached upon the 28th. "Found the meeting begun. I had better have been there the night before—many gentlemen—castle yard. I spoke, and pretty well, but I did not feel myself warmed. Thought the speeches but middling. All unanimous and people warmed. Dined with grand jury, and much talking after it."

To the expenses of the volunteer force he subscribed £500; and finding that he "could do no more good by remaining" in the north, he set out upon the following day, and on the 30th rejoined his family in Hertfordshire. Here he staid some time; going to London on important questions, and rejoicing at every interval of leisure to shake off its dust and turmoil, and wander at will in the beautiful retirement of Wood Hall. Here he describes himself as "reading Hume, considering topics, running over many books. Much time consumed about letters—a great accumulation of these, and necessity

of writing to stir up and do good in various ways; and," not the least characteristic, "visiting daily the sick-room of one of Mr. Smith's footmen, to read and pray with him." Aug. 5th. "A charming day. Walked about an hour with Cowper's Poems—delightful—park—deer—water—wood. Delightful walk in the evening—a most romantic scene for a gentleman's park. They have family prayers night and morning. What a lesson to try to do good by speaking to others! I remember when at Wilford, many years ago, I mentioned to my cousin about family prayers, and he adopted the custom the very next night." Four days later he writes to Lord Muncaster.

"Wood Hall, Aug. 9, 1803.

"My dear Muncaster,

My long journey into Yorkshire, when for near a week my letters accumulated, produced such an arrear as I have not yet been able to pay off, and as happens in such cases, one's friends have been the worst used. Yet this is so vile a principle, that I will not go on acting upon it, but send you a few lines.

"I have got an Act for you, and I will call at the Treasury to-morrow, and get Sargent or Vansittart to direct it. Their heavy communications travel light as air from postage. 'Blest paper credit!' Do you remember the lines? Government would draw on them your vehement indignation if you were near head-quarters, and were to see how shamefully dilatory

they are even where the very life and substance of the state is in question. Before I went into Yorkshire Sir Charles Middleton's plan for defending us against any flotilla was received, considered, and highly approved of; yet when I hoped to hear on my return that the execution was proceeding rapidly, to my grief and shame I found they were still yawning over it without having begun, yet declaring their entire approbation. But it is to no purpose to vex you with my bad tidings. If you were within any reasonable distance, I should call on you to use your influence with Addington to urge him to exertion. He really stands on a precipice. The safety of a great country is far too serious a stake to be complimented away, or even to be sacrificed to friendship; and if, through his negligence and false delicacy, any great loss is sustained, the blood which might have been spared by timely preparation will cry for vengeance.

"Pitt is about to take the command of 3000 volunteers, as Lord-warden; I am uneasy at it. He does not engage on equal or common terms, and his spirit will lead him to be foremost in the battle. Yet as it is his proper post, one can say nothing against it. The plan now adopted, against which I lifted up my voice, but the newspapers scarce made me intelligible, instead of an armed nation, would give us to oppose the enemy scarcely more than he would bring against us, except in the neighbourhood of London; and how different will be the quality of these volunteers from that of

trained veteran soldiers! But I hope government will not adhere to this system, which is adopted, as I believe, because there is an utter want of arms, while at the same time I have too much cause to fear the utmost efforts are not used to supply them. The variety of our offices, and the consequent want of unity and vigour, is highly injurious. I must say farewell.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Two days later he writes

TO HENRY BANKES ESQ. KINGSTON HALL.

"London, Aug. 11, 1803.

" My dear Bankes,

It has often been in my mind to write to you, but I happen to have been more than usually pressed for time. Finding there was to be a county meeting at York, I made a rapid journey down and up again, and have since been resident at Wood Hall, Samuel Smith's, near Hertford, whence I come over to attend the House, and return again towards the end of the week. One word for Wood Hall, which furnishes abundant matter for philosophical, or what is still better, religious reflection on the changes of this precarious world. A very old family of Botelers sold the estate, with a good old house on it, to Sir Thomas Rumbold, fresh from India; and dropping

with gold. Sir Thomas pulled down the old mansion and built a magnificent habitation, finished ad unguem in itself, and all its accompanying apparatus. He is done up. Then comes Paul Benfield, who feeling himself 'Ut Gyaræ clausus scopulis,' &c. adds a magnificent wing; but soon after he also passes to the hammer, and the whole is knocked down to my cousin Samuel Smith.

"But I did not intend saying a word on this head when I took up the pen, but to send you a few particulars of the state of things here, which it seems unfriendly not to furnish to you when at a distance from the scene of action. I forget exactly when you left London, but I think it was about the time of the Income Tax Bill. We got through it much in the same way as through many of a similar sort, and the same rapid manufacture of clauses which had done such honour to the industry of our friend Rose, was seen to proceed with equal celerity in the hands of his successor Vansittart. To be sure, when one sees how acts of parliament are made, one almost wonders they are half as correct, or rather incorrect, as they are. The Army of Reserve Bill passed. Pitt attended constantly; in the main behaving well, but once I understand, when I did not happen to be present, saying something towards Addington which indicated ill-nature and contempt. It was when Addington declared against taxing the future foreign purchasers of funded property, because it would abridge the market, and thereby depreciate the com-

modity to the old stockholders, when Pitt congratulated him, or the House, on the supererogatory tenderness for the public faith, which he so suddenly displayed. Pitt had been, however, before so far reconciled, that though I think he never called Addington, individually, his honourable friend, he did the ministers in general, and Addington called him so frequently. Pitt communicated freely with Yorke,[44] and showed him his plan for the levy en masse, pressing forward strongly the introduction of the scheme, and secretly grumbling at the dilatoriness of ministry. At length he declared to me, and others, that if government would not move it, he himself would. Yorke then gave notice of it, and it has gone through, as you see.

"I must be very short in what remains, and I am sorry for it, because all I have yet said is not worth your reading. But from my having various matters of business to settle with the different offices, I have been much among the ministers; and I am grieved to say that their weakness is lamentable. There is no man who takes such a decided lead as to command the movements of the different parts of the machine; and the consequence is, that the country is now, on this 11th of August, utterly unprepared for the enemy, if he should be more timely in his preparations. Government have not expressed their meaning with any distinctness to the Lord-Lieutenants, as to the organization and even quantity of the

[44] The Right Hon. Charles Yorke, Secretary at War.

levy en masse; and I have by this post a letter from your old friend Grimston,[45] telling me that at the largest meeting of the East Riding ever assembled at Beverley, to carry into execution the levy en masse, though the Lord-Lieutenant, who was there, read to them all the Secretary of State's letters, not one person present conceived he knew government's meaning and wishes, (they had not as I collect the Act, nor would have now but for my individual attention,) and they were forced to separate re infectâ, only appointing days for the subdivision meetings of deputy Lieutenants. You may judge how this damps the rising spirit of the people. Grimston personally seems much hurt that a troop of yeomanry cavalry which he commanded all the last war, with great trouble and expense, and now offered to command again, and to march to any part of Great Britain in case of invasion, is refused, he knows not and is not told why, as are refused also two other offers of other gentlemen. This at a time when all regular and nearly all militia force is withdrawn from Yorkshire. In several other places no answers have been received to most liberal offers of volunteer service; or there has been such delay that the volunteers have been tired with waiting, have been tampered with, and have withdrawn their offer. Government acknowledge that there is an utter want of fire-arms; yet a strange lack of energy prevails as to increasing the supply. Even the river

[45] Thomas Grimston Esq. of Grimston, Holderness.

Thames' defence is quite incomplete. Sir Charles Middleton, no idle talker, gave a plan for the defence of the coast against any flotilla; for the success of which he declared he would answer with his life. Before I went into Yorkshire, Addington and Lord Hobart's office highly approved of it, yet a fortnight after I found it had scarce proceeded a step, and at last it was frittered away in the execution of it. Government now give out I hear that the French are not ready, but the preparations on the other side of the water are incessant and on a prodigious scale. If we have time to mature our means of defence, humanly speaking, I shall not fear the event; but if we should be attacked within the next three weeks, there would indeed be cause for serious alarm. The spirit of the people is roused, and they are in general well disposed to act, but I really fear all may be ruined by the inefficiency of their governors. Pitt is doing great things as Lord-warden. As for our navy, it is certainly true that the commander in chief of the Channel fleet was cruising alone very lately; that had he been able to detach any of his squadron, the St. Domingo men of war would not have got unmolested into Ferrol. Sheridan fights lustily for Addington. He proposed a sufficiently absurd vote of thanks last night to the volunteers who had so gallantly offered their services; but you see clearly that the affectionate regard of government to him knows no bounds in this honeymoon of their union. By the way, Lord St. Vincent

lately offered Tom Sheridan a most lucrative place, which Sheridan refused; very wisely I think. The city are out of all patience with Addington, and I think people in general will begin to be out of temper in various places, from their personal acquaintance with the delays and inefficiency of his administration. There has come out a pamphlet called, Cursory Remarks on State of Parties by a near observer, evidently written by some confidential man, which abuses Pitt with the most bitter malignity.

"I hope you are all pretty well." My wife and little ones, who went to Wood Hall when I went into Yorkshire, and stay there till I go to Bath, which will be as soon as I can be no longer useful here, are very well in the main. Let me hear from you.

Ever yours sincerely and affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. Lord St. Vincent is certainly, I am told, to be replaced by Lord Castlereagh after parliament has risen, and Yorke I believe is to be preferred."

Upon the 17th he was in London, and "at Pitt's house in York Place by four o'clock—talked with him near an hour—he going to dine at John Villiers', and asked me, but I refused, and went on to Broomfield. 18th. Lord Hobart's office. He seemed to think I had some personal interest in the affair, so warm was I for our north of England. Strange determination, to accept only six times number of militia as volun-

teers: it will damp the spirit of the country. Sad work. I remonstrated. Addington seems convinced, as do all others, that a council of war a wise measure, yet dare not press it against Duke of York. All are most distrustful of Duke's military talents. Back to Wood Hall, where by ten at night safely: found all well. Praise the Lord, O my soul.[46] Weather extremely hot for some time, now more broken and moderate. The quiet in this sweet place charming after London heat and hurry. Pitt very ill used by government, Admiralty chiefly. Even the river Thames' safety not provided for; and when the Trinity House proposed the means, the Admiralty foolishly economical. Lord Romney, Lord-Lieutenant of Kent, with Lords Camden and Darnley, on receiving Lord Hobart's letter about twenty-five muskets for 100 men, &c. would not deliver the contents to the county, and obtained an exemption for Kent. Pitt's exertions great, and his ascendency striking—on excellent terms with Duke of York.

"It is really shocking how low our establishments reduced. We could not have resisted 40,000 men getting to London. Pitt says they have been talking lately of preparing against next spring, which makes him half-suspect something is intended just now.[47] 28th. My letters out of Yorkshire and elsewhere are now very strong about the discontents occasioned by the Volunteers' limitation. A most pernicious measure, against which I have been remonstrating both

[46] Diary [47] Diary, Aug. 19.

in and out of parliament with all my might." "On this plan," he writes to a friend in the county,[48] "all Yorkshire would furnish about 21,000 men. I opposed it before the House rose, though no account was given of my arguments. There have not been two opinions as to the expediency of selecting cautiously in manufacturing towns and districts. But was it requisite for that end to damp the zealous ardour of the country in general? It has acted like the sudden check of a violent fermentation. By thus repressing the voluntary spirit, government has incurred a fearful responsibility. I cannot but believe we might have been so manifestly strong, that Buonaparte would have despaired of making any impression on us, and would have given us a real victory without the risk of a defeat, and the bloodshed and expense of a contest."

Leaving Wood Hall late in August, and spending a week with his family upon the road at the house of his friend Matthew Montagu at Sandleford Priory, he arrived on the 3rd of September at the village of Bath Easton, where he designed to take up his quarters for the remainder of the vacation. "Delighted with the beauty of our new villa. Weather delicious. Afternoon and evening read and heard, out of doors, in a lovely arbour by the river. This is a beautiful country; our house exactly like Westmoreland, saving lakes."[49] "I am now come," he says on the first Sunday after his arrival,[50] "to a place where

[48] To W. Hey Esq. Aug. 31. [49] Diary. [50] Journal, Sept. 4.

there is a prospect of my living in more quiet than I have long enjoyed. Oh may I improve it for the best purposes. May I remember that such a precious opportunity as this place affords me of keeping my heart, and making a progress in divine things, may never occur again; that I shall have to render account of it as of a talent committed to my stewardship." He was "occupied chiefly on letters till arrears of correspondence were paid off. Last night had twenty letters ready. Reading a little Hume in dressing, also Greek Testament. Evening, on the water."

The public dangers which at this time beset the nation induced him to make his residence at Bath Easton a season of more than usual devotion: and the record of his employments on the first Friday after his arrival there, shows how he usually spent the days which he devoted to religious services. "Friday, Sept. 9th, half-past eleven. Destined this day for fast-day, meo more, with that degree of abstinence which may best qualify my weak body to go through the day without molesting the soul. My chief objects in this act of humiliation are, to deplore the sins of our country, and still more my own grievous share of them; my manifold provocations of the righteous displeasure of my God and Saviour. To deprecate the wrath of God from our land, and draw down His blessings on us. I would also beg a blessing on our residence at this place, that my time here may tend to my religious advancement, that it may be produc-

tive also of benefit to my children and family, and to others with whom the providence of God connects me.

"For instances of the language of good men in acts of humiliation, vid. Dan. ix. 3—21. A fast-day, Neh. ix. 1; Jonah iii. 5." Here a reference in his Journal to many other passages of Scripture, with a summary of their contents, which appear to have made subjects of meditation.

"Half-past twelve—Let me go now to confession and humiliation, in direct prayer, for my time wears away. Let me deplore my past sins—many years in which I lived without God in the world—then my sins since my having in some degree become acquainted with him in 1785-6. My actual state—my not having duly improved my talents—my chief besetting sins." [Here a reference to a private paper carried about him.] "(My birth-day was worse kept this year than I have long known it, from its being my last day at a friend's house. This therefore to be a sort of birth-day review. I am come here into the arbour by the river side, and am quite secure from interruption.) How greatly are my sins aggravated by the extreme goodness to me of my God and Saviour! I am encumbered with blessings, my cup is so full of them as to overflow. During life all has gone well with me, so far as God has ordered matters, and all the evil has been the result of my own follies. All that I enjoy has been from God—all I suffer from myself. My temporal blessings are su-

perior to those of almost any human being who ever existed. But then my spiritual! Born in the happiest country, at a season of the greatest enjoyment, for hitherto I have suffered nothing from the storms which have raged around me. In a condition of life perhaps the happiest of all, except that possibly a little lower might be both safer and happier, (because I can live less to myself, less in the privacy and quiet I am now enjoying,) but mine is surely one of the very happiest. Then as to what is personal—good natural talents, though not duly improved, and injured by early neglect; a cheerful and naturally sweet temper (a great blessing); the want of that proud self-confidence, (though this has grown in me to the fault of too great diffidence,) which is unfavourable to the reception of religion; a most enjoyable constitution, though not a strong one; an ample fortune, and a generous disposition in money matters. (I speak of this as mere natural temper, not as having in it the smallest merit, for I hope, *at this moment*, I can feel that it is no more than any other natural instinct, except as referred to the will and power of God.) To these blessings have been added most affectionate friends, and near relatives." [Here a reference to his domestic relations.] "My being honoured with the Abolition cause is a great blessing.

"But far more my spiritual blessings. How few are there in parliament on whom the mercy of God has been so bounteously vouchsafed! On none of the early acquaintances with whom I entered life. Praise

the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Above all, let me adore God's unspeakable kindness and long-suffering, in not being prevented from calling me to His fold, by the foreknowledge which He had of my hardness of heart and ingratitude. Then the preventing grace of God. What else has prevented me from bringing a scandal on my profession and Thy cause?" [Here a reference to some occasions in which he supposed himself in especial danger.] "Let the impression of these incidents ever remain with me, to humble me, to keep me mindful how weak I am in myself, how constantly I need the grace of God, how carefully I should avoid all temptation but such as occurs in the path of duty.

"After having lamented my sins before God, that I may feel them the more, and the contrition which they should produce, let me meditate awhile on the guilt of sin, on the majesty and holiness of God, on the base ingratitude and sottish stupidity of man. I will read (meditating-way) Witherspoon's excellent sermon, 'A View of the Glory of God, humbling to the Soul.' O Lord, let Thy Spirit accompany me, let it make me see and feel towards sin as Thou dost, and long to be delivered from every remainder of my corruptions, and to be holy as Thou art holy. (I am reminded, by thinking I hear somebody coming, to pray ejaculatorily to God, to keep me from peevishness if I am interrupted. I have taken the best precautions against it, let me desire this day particularly to be full of love, meekness, and self-denial.)

"It is near half-past two; I have been hitherto quite free from interruption, and even the fear of it. Let me now go to prayer, after a short meditation on the promises of God. I have been large, though how imperfect, in confession. It remains for me to supplicate for the pardon of my sins, and for growth in grace—for a blessing on this place and its employments—for a blessing on my intercourse with others. (Constant previous ejaculatory prayer.) Intercession for country and mankind—slaves—enemies—then for servants—friends—enumeration of different classes, and wife and children. Then thanksgiving enumeration. O Lord, give me Thy Spirit to help me to pray, and praise Thee acceptably, to worship in spirit and in truth. Amen."

Such was the incense which this day ascended from the river's bank, where, like the prophet-courtier of old, he poured forth his meditations.[51] On the same day the following plan appears to have been inserted in his Diary. "As I am likely D. V. to continue here three months, and to enjoy more leisure than usual, I proceed to fix the objects of my attention, and will be as diligent as a due care for the recovery of my health will admit. I will adhere to my plan as closely as I well can, having employments suited to different states of understanding, so that without fatigue I may yet be always employed. In the morning I will try to get two or three hours for composition—drawing up, and storing topics, &c. (After

[51] Dan. x. 4.

having read Brougham on Colonial Policy, and Adam Smith.) I will have in reading a book for minor attention, (into which class may come any novels, plays, or other works of imagination,) for seasons when unfit for much mental application. I mean to read the Greek Testament for at least half an hour daily, and to meditate over parts before read with my morning prayers. Walking out, to learn passages by heart, and keep them up. In conversation to adhere to plan, to have topics ready. I must keep a time account, beginning it to-morrow, and try to redeem time on Sundays for serious, as on common days for general purposes; except that a walk, meditating and solitary, to be a part, when fine, of Sunday's occupations, for I never find my mind more lifted up to God than when thus meditating sub Dio. May the Lord bless my plan, and enable me to redeem the time in future, and to live by rule, (yet never peevish when broken in upon,) and whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, to do all to the glory of God."

The following extracts are from his entry on the public fast day in the succeeding month, the appointment of which he had himself been instrumental in procuring.[52]

"It becomes me on this day to humble myself before the Lord; first, for national sins, those especially wherein I have any share. And alas, I may too justly be said to be chargeable with a measure of that

[52] Vid. Correspondence of William Wilberforce, &c. Aug. 10, 1803.

guilt, which I have not sufficiently tried to prevent. Have I then used my utmost endeavours to amend the public, or my own particular circle, or even my own family. Who knows but that if I had been sufficiently on the watch, and had duly improved all the opportunities of doing good, and preventing evil, which have been afforded me, many who are now strangers and enemies to God might have become known and reconciled to Him? Many grievous sins, which greatly swell the sum of our national account, might never have existed. What openings for usefulness have I enjoyed as an M. P. both in and out of the House of Commons; as an author, actual and possible; as a friend, an acquaintance, a master, &c. Alas, which way soever I look, I see abundant cause for deep humiliation. How much guilt might I have kept out of existence, and consequently how much misery:—East Indian idolatries; internal profaneness; even Slave Trade. And especially, have I sufficiently supplicated God, and done my utmost in this most effectual way, by calling in His aid?

"Secondly, for my own manifold transgressions. These I have down on another paper; they are present with me, and I humbly hope I lament them before God.——We know not what scenes we may be called on to witness. My own death may be at hand. O then, while it is day, work out, O my soul, thy own salvation. Pray to God—

"For thyself—that thou mayst be accepted in the Beloved; that thou mayst be supported under what-

ever trials it may please God to expose thee to; and if it be His holy will, but not otherwise, that thou mayst be continued with thy wife and children in the enjoyment of domestic peace and happiness.

"For thy country—that God would have mercy on us, and deliver us from the power of our enemies; that He would also bless to us our difficulties and dangers, and cause them to be the means of our turning to Him with repentance and holy obedience; that He would restore to us the blessing of peace, and sanctify to us our enjoyments.

"For our rulers—the King and his ministers, and all the public functionaries.

"For my friends, acquaintances, and connexions, particularly for those whom I habitually remember in my prayers."—[Here a list.] "Another class."—[Here a list of his early connexions, including many political friends.] "These are relics of old times. I would especially implore the Divine mercy for Pitt, who is peculiarly exposed.

"Let me pray fervently and sincerely for our enemies, that God would have pity on them, that He would turn their hearts, &c.

"Let me pray for all my fellow-creatures, for all that are in pagan ignorance, particularly for the poor negroes, both in Africa and the West Indies. O Lord, do Thou at length visit them with spiritual blessings and a termination of their temporal sufferings. Amen.

"And to all my supplications and intercessions, let

me add abundant and warm thanksgivings; for, O Lord, Thou hast been to us, and above all to me, abundant in loving-kindness. For our unequalled national blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Run them over in detail, whether as exemption from evils, or possession of goods, &c.

"For my own blessings. So peculiarly full a cup amidst so liberal a banquet. All around me are feasting, but mine is Benjamin's mess. Consider, O my soul, thy country; the period of the world wherein thy lot is cast; thy station in life; thy personal circumstances as to body and mind; thy externals—rank, fortune, favour with men, and especially numerous, kind, and useful friends; the events of thy life; thy having been kept out of office, and too intimate connexion with political companions; thy being kept from utter falling, &c." [Here an enumeration of particulars like that before given.][53]

Such was his preparation against those perils to which none but the careless were indifferent. "The most enlightened and experienced in naval and military matters in this part of the world are most alarmed."[54] "Literally and verily," writes Dr. Milner from a northern town which he was visiting, "there seems not the smallest concern here about the war. I never saw a place so involved in worldly affairs. It is shocking! It is affecting beyond measure."

Happy was it for the country in this hour of dan-

[53] Journal, Oct. 19. [54] To William Hey Esq. July 13.

ger, that amongst many careless ones, "there were found some righteous, for whose sake" the land was spared. Intercession formed a leading part in all his prayers; and his reference at this time to Pitt, and the other relics of early intimacy, is particularly touching. His thoughts were now much turned to Mr. Pitt, by the danger to which his office of Lord-warden seemed likely to expose him. "Pitt," he wrote the day before to Mr. Gisborne, "is exerting himself with the utmost alacrity, and if the county of Kent, one of the districts most open to the attack of the enemy, be prepared for his reception, I believe it is, under Providence, to be ascribed to his efforts and authority. O my dear G., though for many years there has been so little of the eadem velle et nolle, that there cannot have existed much of what merits the name of friendship for that great man, yet I feel a good deal for him on account of the danger to which he is exposed, while, I fear, so little prepared for the event which may ensue. For Pitt to close his life in resisting the enemies of his country, would indeed be in history a brilliant catastrophe; but how differently must we think and feel, who see through a Scriptural medium!"

But while his attention was thus directed to the common alarm, he was preserved from one of those imminent and unexpected dangers which continually surround our path. He was a constant observer of the advice of Bishop Berkeley,[55] "that modern

[55] Siris, § 119.

scholars would, like the ancients, meditate and converse in walks and gardens and open air." His favourite haunt at this time was a retired meadow, which bordered on the Avon. A steep bank shaded by some fine trees, one of which by its projection formed a promontory in a deep part of the stream, was his common seat. On the 25th of October, he says, "Walked with pencil and book, and wrote. A charming day. I was sitting by the river-side, with my back to the water, on a portable seat, when suddenly it struck me that it was not quite safe. Writing, I might be absent, and suddenly slip off, &c. I moved therefore a few yards, and placed my stool on the grass, when in four or five minutes it suddenly broke, and I fell flat on my back, as if shot. Had it happened five minutes sooner, as I cannot swim, I must, a thousand to one, have been drowned, for I sat so that I must have fallen backwards into the river. I had not the smallest fear or idea of the seat's breaking with me; and it is very remarkable, that I had rather moved about while by the river, which would have been more likely to break it, whereas I sat quite still when on the grass. A most providential escape. Let me praise God for it."

Several of his private observations during this summer and autumn are too characteristic to be omitted. When visiting a house where there was much society of a trifling kind, "Sad work indeed," he says, "oaths of minor kind, most unprofitable talk, alas! I would not live at 'a Place' to be subject to much of this, for

almost any consideration. Quite tired of our relaxation. What absurd work!" At another time, "A servant here is dangerously ill. I know they have no objection to my talking to him, yet I feel a sad lukewarmness, and even averseness to it. Did Christ feel the same towards me and other poor sinners? Whatever be the cause of my disinclination, shyness, pride, what it may, let me not search out for reasons to justify the abstaining from what I wish to avoid, but obey the plain primary dictates of conscience." "Praying with the sick servant."—"I saw the poor man for twenty minutes, and prayed with him"—appear as entries almost daily during the residue of his visit.

In another place he says, "Nothing could exceed the kindness with which our friends received us. Alas, it grieves me to see a family, in all respects so amiable, fooled at all by the world. Their wealth is their bane. It connects them with fashionable, thoughtless neighbours, connects their children with frequenters of scenes of dissipation. Oh may God bless them! How hard is it for them that have riches to enter into, and keep in, the narrow road! Beware, O my soul."

Among his Sunday's observations, he says, "I have allowed so little time for evening devotions, that my prayers have been too often hurried over. 'Tis my old fault; my profane studies, or my letters, engross me. Yet if we be alienated from God at all, it matters not by what it is, whether our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, or cares of this

life; whether with literature, or pleasure, or ambition. I have often on a Saturday evening found in myself, though I hope not allowed, this kind of sentiment—'Oh I shall have time enough for religious occupations to-morrow, and how shall I find sufficient employment for the Sunday?' O Lord, this indicates a sad want of love. How different David's feelings, Psalm lxxxiv. Oh quicken me in Thy righteousness. Give me all holy affections in their just measure of vigour and force."

Again, "I fear I am not improving time to the utmost, in reading and hearing so much. I am seduced by the pleasantness of it. I will try to compose more, and to write something that may be useful. Composing will at least be beneficial to myself, and politics as my trade, and remarks drawn from history, must be useful. Also I will in the evening read for half an hour at least the Old Testament, with which I am not well acquainted. When can I do it, if not now, when I have my time so much at my own command?"

Soon afterwards he says, "I am reading the Psalms just now, comparing the two versions, and reading Horne's Commentary. What wonderful compositions! What a decisive proof of the Divine origin of the religion to which they belong! There is in the world nothing else like them—and that this proof should exist where there are so many others of the same kind, and of other kinds. If the Psalms, suppose, and some other parts of Scripture, belonged to different systems . . . as the 3rd chapter of St. Matthew; 5th,

6th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, of St. John; St. Paul's Epistles; Isaiah, &c. . . . we might, were this internal evidence the only proof afforded, be divided and puzzled. But how wonderful, how unaccountable, except on the true hypothesis, that each should in itself be so excellent, and should belong to, and be connected with, the others, and have the same confessed source and origin!"

His Journal, in which he had lately inserted many notices concerning his state of mind, concludes with this striking caution—"Let me beware, lest I make Christ the minister of sin, by comforting myself too easily when any temptation has prevailed over me, with the reflection, that I have a remedy at hand; it is only to humble myself and implore pardon, and, the promises being sure, to obtain forgiveness. There is in truth no other way; but beware, O my soul, lest thou provoke God to withdraw His Spirit and leave thee to thy natural weakness. Not I hope that I sin in the view of this willingness of God to forgive, but I fear, after having discovered the workings of corruption, that I too easily take comfort. Let me rather, when I have thus detected in myself the humiliating marks of my imperfect state, go softly for some time. Let me think of that God and Saviour with whom I have trifled; of my base ingratitude; of the aggravating circumstances of my sins; of the multitude of the mercies which have been poured out on me; of the signal advantages and privileges with which I have been favoured. These reflections, through the good-

ness of God and the working of His Spirit, may produce a more settled lowliness and watchfulness of mind."

His health, at all times weak, had been so shattered by the fatigues of the preceding session, as to create great alarm amongst his nearest friends. The quiet of the vacation, early hours, and the Bath waters, had in a great measure restored him to his average state; though he "was reminded by" his "sensations that" his "frame was not susceptible of that thorough repair which it used to receive at Bath in earlier days."[56] How he would bear the renewed fatigues of London seemed a doubtful question, and one friend wrote repeatedly and urgently to press upon him the duty of withdrawing altogether from public life. But he was not of a temper to retire and leave his task half done; and though he was constitutionally inclined to defer too much to the opinion of those whose moral qualities he valued highly, in this instance happily his own view of duty was unshaken. How firmly and gently he put aside these solicitations may be seen in the following letter.

"Near Bath, Nov. 4, 1803.

"My dear Babington,

Many thanks to you for your last kind letter. I think I do not deceive myself in believing that it would be a high gratification to me to retire from public life, but you I am sure will agree with me

[56] Letter to Rev. T. Gisborne, Oct. 18.

that such a measure ought to be the result of much deliberation. What you say will lead me to reflect on it seriously.

"But I assure you I think I am by no means so much worn out, or so near it, as you imagine. I am not indeed equal to any bodily exertion, but it is as a mouse at its best cannot draw a cart, or to compare myself a little less disparagingly, as a pony could not draw a broad-wheeled waggon; still, the pony, or if you will the mouse, may in its way, and up to the measure of its natural powers, render good service and be fit for use, and not merely for being sent to grass for the rest of its life. But on this head I will consult my friend the Dean, on whom I can entirely rely for all the qualities requisite for enabling him to form a satisfactory judgment in the case. Kindest remembrances. Farewell.

I am ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"Perhaps I should hesitate," he tells Mr. Hey,[57] "about going up to attend the meeting of parliament, but for the consideration, that as I cannot serve my country in a military line, I ought the rather to labour in my department of civil service; and if by my efforts government can be spurred on to increased activity, I may effect more than could be achieved by the strongest arm. I often think how little I could have done in a state of society in which muscular

[57] Nov. 18.

force was the main point of superiority." While thus "labouring" in his own "department," no man could better sympathize with those who were called to a different sphere of duty.

TO CAPTAIN BEDFORD, R. N.,
H. M. S. THE THUNDERER, BANTRY BAY, IRELAND.

"Bath, Nov. 5, 1803.

"My dear Sir,

Though I have suffered myself too long to defer writing to you, I can truly assure you, that not a day has passed without my thinking of you, and always with an affectionate concern for your comfort and welfare. But so much time is consumed in going twice a-day for the water to and from Bath, and my acquaintance there is so large, that I have been forced to ask a letter of licence from many of my correspondents. I call to mind however where you are, and how employed; and this entitles you to priority of attention. If you are in a situation not only solitary, but dangerous; not only estranged from all your friends, but exposed to many enemies; not merely to those whom war compels us to call by that name, but to those natural enemies, if they may be so termed, the manifold dangers and hardships of a winter's cruise . . . if you are subjected to all these evils and risks for the protection of us men of peace and our wives and little ones, we ought to think of you with unceasing affection and gratitude, and endeavour in

every way to sweeten your cup and manifest our sense of the obligations we owe you.

"I trust, my dear sir, that though I am writing to a sea-officer I may honestly avow that I pant for peace. Alas! that the bad passions of men should produce such a state of things, that the two most enlightened nations on earth . . . possessing more than any others the means of enjoying and diffusing happiness . . . should be respectively straining every nerve in order to aggravate each other's sufferings and accomplish each other's destruction. Oh for that blessed state when the reign of peace and love shall be complete and universal! With these sentiments and feelings you may be sure that I shall lose no opportunity of promoting the restoration of peace with France. It is much to be regretted that, from pride and other similar passions, nations are always forward to rush into wars, though the bulk of a people soon begin to repent of them and to wish for the termination of hostilities. Ministers of state, on the contrary, are really less prone to get into wars; but when a country is once plunged into them, they are drawn forward by their own schemes; they flatter themselves that they shall by this measure and that, weaken the power of the enemy; and forgetting that the expenditure of blood and treasure is always going on, they seldom are disposed to leave off till they are forced to it. Often also they are afraid lest a less honourable peace than the sanguine expectations of men led them to hope might be obtained, should disgrace their charac-

ter, and fix on them an imputation of pusillanimity or weakness. They should remember more than they do, that it is the bulk of the people who suffer the evils of war, but that they reap little advantage from its most successful prosecution. How have I been drawn on! Surely if the contents of my letter could be seen it would be ordered to be burned on the quarter-deck. Yet if I mistake not, the friend to whom I write does not greatly disagree with me either in opinions or feelings. * * *

"May every blessing attend you, my dear sir. It is the frequent prayer, I sincerely assure you, of him who is always very truly yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He returned to London at the meeting of parliament, and entered the House while the King's speech was reading. "How I love to be quiet with my family," he says at the close of the recess, "how long a period of retirement did it appear on looking forward, and now it is gone like a dream, and I am about to plunge into the bustle of life again."[58]

There had been throughout the autumn occasional "rumours of the return of peace,"[59] but they had now all passed away. Invasion indeed had been so long expected, that men were becoming hardened to the threat. "A general sense of security has taken the place of alarm. Several members of the government, who were all alive to call up the country,

[58] Diary, Nov. 22. [59] Diary.

are now made cooler from the mere effect of having become familiar with the idea of danger. Men of no great strength of mind act more from their feelings than their judgment. London now thought safe—that the French cannot from a flotilla land an army of many together. Two days ago a good account of Russia's army."[60] Yet it was clear that we were entering on a dangerous struggle, and few looked with any confidence to the vigour of the present government. "They seem every where," he complains, "in low estimation."[61] "One meets in the Pump-room people from different parts of England, and I think, without exception, that in every quarter they are accused of gross remissness and incapacity."[62] "The ministry," writes "the Dean,"[63] from Cambridge,[64] "are every where, but particularly here, thought weak on the whole, but exceedingly well-intentioned. I do not hear a mouth opened against their principles. I am sure nothing would give so much general satisfaction as a junction between Pitt and Addington; Pitt's vigour, and Addington's discretion, would please exceedingly." This was exactly his own view. "I shall be very glad," he tells Mr. Babington,[65] "if it be practicable, to bring Pitt and Addington together again. While on the one hand I am forced to acknowledge that the present administration does not command that respect, which

[60] Diary. [61] Ib.
[62] Letter to Rev. Thomas Gisborne, Oct. 18.
[63] Milner. [64] Nov. 2. [65] Nov. 4.

in our circumstances is desirable, yet I dread the return of all the old Cabinet to power."

He soon had an opportunity of pressing this arrangement upon Mr. Pitt, with whom he spent the whole of one day, "Dec. 13th, from breakfast till dinner," in private consultation. The wishes of all who were free from party bias pointed in the same direction. Though "the government Journals talked of immediate invasion," and Mr. "Addington showed" him "a letter from Lord St. Vincent, in which he said the attempt at invasion would be made this week;" there was still an evident languor in all the preparations for defence. "You surprise me," he replied to Mr. Hare Naylor, "very much, by what you say concerning the state of your coast, for though our eastern shore of Yorkshire is by no means in a situation to receive the enemy, yet it was natural to suppose that Sussex, as the road to the capital, would be taken care of, and in fact I was told it was thoroughly prepared. Certainly you have a Lord-Lieutenant of more than ordinary activity."

"The general opinion of government is, that it is sadly blundering and inefficient. Yet people are afraid of the old set entire. Windham and Co. strong in opposition. Fox manifestly drawing towards them. Provoked by cursory remarks. 'Tis said Sheridan trying to pique him by saying, 'You will get Pitt in again if you oppose.' He peevishly says, 'I can't bear fools, any thing but fools.' This 17th of December I have heard of the accoutrements being received at Hull, and that they will be de-

livered to the East Riding volunteers." Yet a week later he was told "that only half their arms, and none of their accoutrements, had reached them. It is shocking work; yet not being quite clear that there is much real blame, I do not like to speak of it in the House." [66]

The ensuing Christmas and the recess were now approaching, and he was as usual anxious to turn it to the best advantage. "Who knows but that it may be my last preparation for eternity." [67] "My heart is in a sad state. O heal my backslidings. Bring me back to Thee. Take away the heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh. Blessed be God that I am not now about to plunge immediately into the bustle and hurry of London and parliamentary business, but that a recess is before me, in which I may have the means of some privacy, and opportunities of meditation and devotional abstraction. O Lord, do Thou vouchsafe me Thy quickening Spirit; without Thee I can do nothing. Mortify in me all ambition, vanity, vainglory, worldliness, pride, selfishness, and aversation from God, and fill me with love, peace, and all the fruits of the Spirit." "This is a dull day with me; my mind is sadly heavy. I see with my judgment the great truths which this day commemorates; that He who enjoyed the glory of the Father before the world was, came down, emptied Himself, and became a wailing infant for our sakes. I see that it was unutterable love, but I seem incapable of feeling any thing.

[66] Diary, Dec. 17. [67] Diary.

I have got up early this last week, and have had some three quarters, or an hour, for private devotion in a morning. I hoped to have perceived on this day the blessed effects of it; but I believe I have too much reckoned on it as a settled thing, as any effect follows its cause. Res delicata est Spiritus Dei. Perhaps this dull, spiritless frame is designed as a punishment to me for this thought. But this same course, with more constant humility and watchfulness, must be right. O Lord, enable me to press on. How wonderful is this callousness! a sort of mental paralysis. It may not however be without its uses; it may make me feel more how absolutely helpless I am in myself; may keep me more simply dependent on the grace and Spirit of God. O Lord, I know not what I am, but to Thee I flee for refuge! I would surrender myself to Thee, trusting Thy precious promises, and against hope believing in hope. Thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and therefore however cold and dull I am, yet, waiting on the Lord, I trust I shall at length renew my strength. Even now my heart seems to grow warmer; oh let me fall again to prayer and praise, and implore fresh supplies of strength and grace."[68]

"I have read too little of the Bible this week. In course, I am in Deuteronomy, but to rouse my sluggish heart I have been occasionally dipping into the Prophecies and Epistles."[69] "Give me, Lord, spiritual understanding; let me drink of the water

[68] Journal, Dec. 18 and 25. [69] Diary, Dec. 31.

of life. To Thee, O Lord, I fly for succour; Thy promises are sure; and Thou wilt cast out none that come to Thee. *There* is my stay; otherwise Thou mightest well cast me out; but by commanding us to 'have grace,' 'to grow in grace,' Thou showest that we may. Oh let me then rouse myself, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. I have found my heart much affected by looking at past entries in my Journal; and at the idea that, to the eye of God, all my various crimes, vanities, and follies, are present, in their full, unabated, unsoftened size and character, as they at the time appeared to me. O Lord, enable me to purify myself as Thou art pure." "I humbly hope I feel deeply humbled at the footstool of God's throne, and prostrate I plead the atoning blood of Christ, and humbly trust in His promises of pardon and of grace. When I look forward to the scene before me, and think how ill I have gone on, I shrink back with dread. But, O Lord, I cast my care on Thee; I flee to Thee for succour. Saviour of sinners, save me. Help, Lord, help, watch over me, and guide and guard me. Amen. Amen."[70]

It is no slight proof of the high measure of holiness to which he had attained, that he should have been thus lowly in his own sight, whilst those who most continually watched his conduct, could only give God thanks for the great grace vouchsafed to him.

It is delightful to contrast with his own language

[70] Journal, Dec. 31.

the observation of one who, with as holy and as humble a soul, was just entering on his brief but glorious course. Henry Martyn was now passing a few weeks in London; and was brought by Mr. Grant to Broomfield. Here he saw Mr. Wilberforce surrounded by his family and friends. Their "conversation," is the language of Mr. Martyn's private journal, "during the whole day was edifying, agreeable to what I should think right for two godly senators; planning some means of bringing before parliament propositions for bettering the moral state of the colony of Botany Bay. At evening worship Mr. Wilberforce expounded sacred Scripture with serious plainness, and prayed in the midst of his large household." [71]

The session opened upon the 1st of February, and the breach was evidently widening between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Addington. "I need not tell you," writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster, "that I have endeavoured to keep them in amity: but each has been surrounded with enemies to the other. Dear Muncaster, Pitt and Addington were intimate friends —I reflect with thankfulness to Heaven that I have friends who deserve that honourable appellation; who are bound to me by ties which no political differences can ever loosen. Indeed I fear that 'never can true reconcilement grow, where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep.' It is really sad work." He had talked over the subject with Mr. Pitt before the commencement of the session. "After breakfast to see

[71] Journals and Letters of Henry Martyn, vol. I. p. 86.

Pitt—much political talk—found him resolved not to hamper himself with engagements, or go into systematic opposition." [72] This now combined the most discordant elements. "Lord Camden tells me that it is certain that Fox and the Grenvilles have coalesced." [73] But with neither of these leaders, whose adherents were called respectively, the old and new opposition, did Mr. Pitt ally himself. On the "Volunteers' Bill, Pitt explained his ideas, and government seemed to approve of them." [74] Next day on the same measure, "Pitt was excellent and useful," [75] and he did not even take part in Sir John Wrottesley's motion for an inquiry into the conduct of government in the Irish insurrection.

Of this debate, in which there was a "sad opposition between outward speech and inward sentiments," he sends Lord Muncaster the following sketch.

"Broomfield, March 10, 1804.

"My dear Muncaster,

I know well what would be the variations of your expressive countenance if you were a witness of the scenes which have lately passed in St. Stephen's. Of all achievements of the human face however, Tierney's on Wednesday night was the greatest I ever saw exhibited. You would have had much food for moralizing, had you been in the House. If, luckily for him, Fox had not *got* spoken, (to use one of Lord

[72] Diary, Jan. 10.
[73] Ib. Feb. 14.
[74] Diary, Feb. 27.
[75] Ib. Feb. 28.

Melville's elegant tournures,) he would not however have got off so easily. Windham also could only explain, not reply; and Grey, of whom hoaxing is not the forte, preserves also an old liking to Tierney, which, though it did not prevent his striking, prevented his hitting as hard as Fox would have laid on. The latter, by the way, seems disposed to have no mercy on Addington. I really feel for Addington, who is a better man than most of them, though not well fitted for the warfare of St. Stephen's. He has exhibited (you, I think, would also interpret it this way) marks of soreness, by losing his temper readily, once indeed without the smallest reason. Pitt on that occasion behaved nobly. Instead of retorting angrily, as I own I feared, or even showing any contemptuous coolness, he scarcely seemed conscious of Addington's having exposed himself, and answered with perfect good humour. You would have been struck with the difference between Pitt's demeanour and that of his friends, many of whom you know bear no good-will to Addington.

"All this is of course secret history.—We have again been much alarmed about our dear little Barbara. How afflicting must it be to have a child ill and not to be able to provide the remedy! I subscribe to hospitals and dispensaries with increased good-will since I became a husband and a father.

"You know the high opinion I entertain of Sir Charles Middleton. He, I am sorry to say, believes

our administration to have been strangely negligent. But I must break off. Kindest regards.

Yours ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"Sir Charles Middleton's opinion weighs with me beyond that of any other naval man, because besides his providence, his experience, his integrity, he is less of a party man by far than any other I have been able to consult. Nearly all the naval officers whom I have heard speak their minds, declare that the force by which we are opposing the enemy is insufficient for its purpose. One naval lord of professional celebrity said lately, 'We shall soon probably be at war with the navies of France, Spain, Holland, and even Portugal,' (he might have added Genoa, which furnishes, as Lord St. Helen's assures me, multitudes of excellent sailors,) 'and we shall have no adequate force to oppose to them.' Our ships are wearing away with unprecedented rapidity from various circumstances, and no efforts have been made to bring forward new ships as our old ones are expended."[76]

This was the ground of Mr. Pitt's first act of direct opposition to the government, by his motion (March 15th) upon the state of the navy. "Pitt's motion on navy state. I moved by Tierney's low attack, and quite unpremeditatedly answered him, and as was told, extremely well. I felt my legs more than I

[76] Letter to Lord Muncaster.

ever remember in argument. Never was a more wretched defence made. Slept five hours, and awoke with the train of my ideas running round like a mill. Full of the debate, and vexed to find such symptoms of solicitude; yet I hope it was nervousness."[77] Though the motion was lost, yet he soon after expresses his conviction that it "had done good. The Admiralty, I am glad to hear, are exerting themselves with double, I should rather say tenfold, activity."[78] Yet this step exposed Mr. Pitt to unusual reproach. "Every body blames him as factious for his motion about the state of the navy. He is conceived to have had little ground for it, and rather to have lost himself, as they phrase it."[79] "How sad are the effects of party spirit and party principle in this country! Even where they do not prevail, the idea of their prevalence is so general, that all is ascribed to that tainted source."[80] "It is not in fact talents in which we are chiefly wanting; but resolute integrity, which would correct abuses, and select proper men for important stations. Alas, my friend, I have lived long enough to see that real integrity is a rare quality, and at the same time the most valuable of all."[81]

It was in great measure his perfect freedom from the taint of party spirit which kept his natural affections unimpaired amidst the hardening incidents of public life. "Yesterday," he says,[82] March 20th, "on

[77] Diary. [78] Letter to Lord Muncaster.
[79] Diary, March 24. [80] Letter to Lord Muncaster.
[81] Letter to Lord Muncaster. [82] Diary.

entering the House Tom Stanley told me of poor Lord Alvanley's death after a short illness. Overcome with the event to tears, and retired. In the evening, Pitt showed me a few lines he had written to take leave of him the night before, recommending his son, Pitt's godson, to Pitt's protection. 'God bless the King, and country in general, in these perilous times.'"

Freedom from party spirit helped him also to maintain a sober estimate of their relative importance, amidst the crowd of objects by which he was surrounded; and he would frequently lament the want of this safeguard in other public men, even when he formed a favourable judgment of their real principles. In this tone he wrote to Mrs. Hannah More.

"London, March 1, 1804.

"My dear Friend,

I am worried to pieces, and vexed beyond measure, entre nous, by friends of ours. Alas! alas! this corrupting world! *You* must think that the staining of our statute book for the first time, by recommending Sunday for a day of drilling in England; (for two military men declared Scotland would not bear it, and the distinction was accordingly made;) you must think, who both know and believe the Bible, that this open affront to the majesty and protection of God, is likely to draw down His vengeance on us. As it happened, the Bishops of London and Durham were out of town when the Bill passed through the Lords; the Archbishop of Canterbury was so ill as not

to be capable of doing business. But *now* I can get nothing done, though a private application would effect the whole easily. So much delicacy, and caution, and fear—of any thing, and every thing, but of that which, even for interest's and safety's sake, is alone worthy of apprehension,—

'Je crains Dieu,' &c.

"All this however to your private ear. It is only to a friend I breathe out my sorrows, and only to you, that as occasion offers, you may counteract the disposition I regret.

Ever yours affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

With the same view he had written to Mr. Gisborne in the autumn,[83] urging him to bring the question before several of the bishops, "that if any opportunity should offer, our shameful selection of Sunday, exclusively of other days, may be rectified in parliament;" and he had now been endeavouring to interest the Bishop of Gloucester (Huntingford) upon the subject.[84]

The holidays suspended for a time the rising strife of parties, but when parliament met early in April, things at once assumed a hostile aspect. "Pitt, who returned on Monday, disposed to go more decidedly into opposition than he was a few weeks ago. He is surrounded by men of party spirit without his integrity, and of

[83] Oct. 18, 1803. [84] Diary, April 15.

strong passions."[85] Immediately on his return Mr. Pitt desired an interview. "I was unluckily detained here yesterday," he writes from York Place on Wednesday,[86] "till after the hour I had mentioned. If you can find time to come so far, I should be very glad to see you to-day; if not, I will call on you at any hour you please to-morrow." In the course of Wednesday Mr. Wilberforce "went up to Pitt, whom missed yesterday. Talked with him; and set him down at dinner. How changed from a few weeks ago!—ready now to vote out Addington, though he has not bound himself to Fox. I fear he has been urged forward by people of less wisdom than himself. I am out of spirits and doubtful about the path of duty in these political battles."[87] "I fear that I am partly influenced by personal considerations. I cannot help regretting that Addington's temperance and conciliation should not be connected with more vigour. Lord, direct me right, and let me preserve an easy mind, resigned to Thee, and fixed on Thy favour. All else is vanity."[88]

His Sunday's thoughts turned in the same direction. "I am distressed just now by the state of political parties. My distress arises partly I hope from real doubts how I ought to act, yet I fear there is also a mixture of worldly fear, and also a weakness of nature, which though not unamiable, ought not to be suffered

[85] Diary, April 17.
[86] Right Hon. W. Pitt to William Wilberforce Esq. April 18.
[87] Diary, April 18. [88] Journal, April 17.

to influence conduct, or even to discompose me. O Lord, to Thee I will pray, to enlighten my understanding and direct my judgment, and then to strengthen me to take the path of duty with a firm and composed though feeling mind. Poor Addington! with all his faults, I feel for him. But what a lesson does he read me! Had he really acted up to his principles, he might probably have been above his present difficulties. O Lord, Thou rulest. Thy will be done. And keep me from being absorbed by, or too solicitous about, worldly things, remembering that a Christian is to regard and feel himself a stranger and a pilgrim, and to have his portion, his conversation, his treasure, his country in heaven. Be these my habitual feelings, through Thy grace, O Lord."[89]

"Fox's motion for a Committee concerning the defence of the country" came on the next day. "Debate lasted till four in the morning. Fox spoke feebly—Pitt ably; but too strong. Perceval's feeling and warm defence of Addington was greatly to his honour."[90]

He was most anxious, as he tells Mr. Hey, that Pitt should keep himself clear of that "co-operation (coalition is a word of bad omen) which has been lately announced, and with which you must, I think, have been disgusted. For my part, I still cherish the hope of seeing him acting with Mr. Addington, and shall use all my endeavours to bring the junction

[89] Journal, April 22. [90] Diary, April 23.

about. There have been busy, ill-meaning friends on each side." As he had Mr. Pitt's assurance, "that he would take no decisive step, until after having written to the King, and waited till he was well again," he trusted that there still was room for mediation; and though "he had given over suggesting matters to Addington, as he had long continued doing with the frankness of an old friend," he "had a long talk with him."[91] "The Lord Chancellor[92] came in, and said that he had lately told Pitt how much he wished to see him and Addington united, that (with great seriousness) he could not conceive any man in such times as these had a right to think of any thing but the country, and my poor old master there, pointing to Buckingham House."[93] He was satisfied that it was "the wish of every body in London, except the immediate connexions of the ministry, that Pitt was in office; but that all, except Fox's party, deprecated the idea of union with him. I believe that if the King would press Pitt to come into power with Addington, in an office not touching him close, he would accede to it from his veneration and affection for the King. Otherwise the consequence will either be that the King's head will give way, and the Prince of Wales be established Regent, or a coalition ministry will be formed between the Grenvillites and the Foxites, which would injure Pitt in the public estimation."[94] With these views he wrote "to desire an

[91] Letter to Lord Muncaster.
[92] Lord Eldon.
[93] Diary.
[94] Ib. April 27.

interview with the Lord Chancellor, to whom I had said two or three days ago, that he could do more good than any other man in England. He returned a very friendly answer, and I saw him to-day, and his language and sentiments did him honour. Saw him for half an hour, about one. He open, cordial, and generous."[95] He thus transmitted to the north the actual state of things.

"Broomfield, May 1, 1804.

"My dear Muncaster,

. . You would not perhaps scold me, but I should really reproach myself, if I were not to send you a few words, though they must be but a few, on the present state of politics and parties. My wish has been that Pitt might consent to unite with several of the present administration, and especially with Addington himself. Grieved indeed am I to say, when I call to mind their former long and intimate friendship, that a sad degree of hostility has taken possession of both their bosoms, and chiefly, I fear, of that which, belonging to the strongest character of the two, was likely to partake of that strength. Still, you will anticipate all I could say to you, of the fatal consequences which might follow from the King's being in his present state compelled to receive into his Cabinet an administration, consisting entirely of men who had forced themselves against his will into his service, and containing some persons who were

[95] Diary, April 28.

naturally the objects of his extreme aversion. For my own part I confess, what I believe you know, Fox is not so obnoxious to me as some of Pitt's own connexions; but I fear the country in general would misconstrue their being united in an administration formed, as this would be, from the effects of their joint opposition. Pitt's character would suffer, and if so the loss might be irreparable.

"The newspapers will tell you what passed in the two Houses. I may add—in confidence, till it be otherwise known—that a private intimation had been made to the General,[96] as you used to call him, through an old legal friend of ours, that either he would be sent for, or that a negociation would be opened with him through that same legal friend. I have myself (this most strictly entre nous) had some conversation with that legal friend, and his sentiments and language do him the highest honour. He really in the main exactly concurs with me in wishes and opinions, as to what is best, both for the country and for the General himself.

"I am staying to-day in the country, enjoying the first greetings of summer—the nightingales are abundant, and, my dear friend, while through nature I look up to nature's God, and still more when, from regarding the Author of nature, I further contemplate Him in the still more endearing character of the God of grace and consolation, my heart is warmed and thankful for the unequalled blessings I enjoy. I look

[96] Vide vol. i. p. 69.

down with unaffected superiority on the contentious sparrings of our political parties. Happy they who pursue those paths which even here are alone paths of peace, though pleasantness may sometimes (precarious pleasantness) be found in other ways, and which alone will at length conduct us to permanent and solid happiness. O my dear Muncaster, press forward in these ways.——The Scriptures, prayer, with humble reliance on our Redeemer and Intercessor, and on the aids of His promised Spirit, these are the sure means of progress.

With kind remembrances,
I am ever affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

On the day before he wrote thus, Pitt he found "had received an intimation that he would be sent for by G. R. or negociated with through the Chancellor. Fox in the evening showed he knew nothing about it."[97] On the following Monday "Pitt saw the King for the first time. All looked foul before. Rose most injudiciously intimated that the King had authorized Pitt to give in a plan of government. But surely this should have been a private intimation. Though no contract direct or indirect between Pitt and Fox, yet Fox's friends will abuse Pitt grossly if Fox does not come in, and he does."[98] Two days later he "called on Pitt, and heard the state of the political negociation."[99] "Pitt the 25th of April wrote to the King, telling him

[97] Diary, April 30. [98] Ib. May 7. [99] Ib. May 9.

of the open and decisive part he felt it his duty to take about his ministry under Addington, declaring he would never commit himself with any man (he had told me that he would never force Mr. Fox upon the King). The 2nd of May, Pitt submitted to the King through the Chancellor, by letter, a plan of administration, containing heads of the great parties. King's answer. Pitt returned the 6th a very proper answer, (mild answer turneth away wrath,) and entreating an interview. Had it next day."

He now again announced the state of affairs to Lord Muncaster.

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

"(Private.) Broomfield, May 10, 1804.

"My dear Muncaster,

As you may like to receive a little private intelligence, I would not omit or delay writing. A look from a friend is better than nothing.

"You will be glad to hear that during an interview of more than three hours which Pitt had with the King, the latter treated him with great cordiality, and even affection, and talked with as much rationality and propriety as at any former period of his life. Before Pitt supported Fox's motion, he wrote the King a private letter, intimating that he felt himself under the painful necessity of opposing his Majesty's government, from a firm conviction that his doing so was indispensable to the national safety and honour, &c. He also afterwards by the King's desire sub-

mitted to him his general ideas of the sort of administration which it would be best to form in the present conjuncture: viz. an administration composed of the heads of all the several great political parties; grounding this opinion on the probability of a long war, and the advantages of a strong government at home, abroad, and in Ireland. A few days afterwards he saw the King, and again explained and enforced as far as he properly could the same ideas. The King objected a good deal at first to the Grenvilles, but at length gave way very handsomely, but indicated such a decided determination against Fox, that it would have been wrong to press it further.

"The Grenvilles, as you hear, say they cannot accept office without Fox and Co.; and so Pitt is to come in with his own personal friends, Lord Harrowby, &c. and with some of the present men. The country in general I am persuaded will like this best, though the old opposition partisans will be enraged. And though Pitt had most clearly explained from the first that Fox and Co. were not to consider him bound in any degree directly or indirectly, to press their admission into office, and that they were therefore not to shape their conduct on any such supposition, yet I see clearly Pitt will be abused. You cannot think how violent S. is. He is loud too that the government cannot *stand at all.* Surely he might have formed some estimate of Pitt's powers. The Carlton House politics I hear are all in favour of Fox. Pitt of course would have taken any of the Prince's friends.

"I am not sure that this arrangement is not the very best possible; the Grenvilles are so wrong-headed and warlike. Surely, except with a view to the heir apparent, they are wrong in uniting themselves with people to whose political opinions their own are decidedly opposite in almost all important particulars. Farewell.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"I agree with you in all you say respecting the General," was Lord Muncaster's reply. "Well do I remember, about this time twenty years ago, urging him with great warmth and earnestness (upon his telling me that he had just sent his letter to the St. Alban's, and my lamenting over it) 'never, never upon any account to suffer any thing to lead him into a coalition with his then great rival in politics;' that I verily thought it would lose him his great stay, 'the opinion of the country at large.'"

CHAPTER XIX.

MAY 1804 TO FEBRUARY 1806.

Encouraging prospects of Abolition Cause—Motion carried in the House of Commons by a great majority—Delay in the House of Lords—Pitt's promise of suspending Guiana Slave Trade by Proclamation—Summer at Broomfield—Lyme—Literary employments—Projected work on the Slave Trade—Correspondence with Henry Brougham—New session—Reconciliation between Pitt and Addington—Abolition Bill again experiences a temporary repulse, notwithstanding its steady advance in public favour—Pitt repeats his promise of suspending Guiana Slave Trade—Charges against Lord Melville—effectually supported by Wilberforce—His feelings on the subject—Proclamation against Guiana Slave Trade delayed, but at length issued—Trafalgar—Pitt's death—his debts, and funeral.

THE new ministry had no sooner entered upon office than Mr. Wilberforce renewed his motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The question had seemed to slumber for the last four years. In 1800 and 1801, the plan of abolishing by a general convention had appeared too promising to be risked by a parliamentary defeat. In 1802, the important object of preventing new crimes in Trinidad had produced such delay that the session had closed before the

measure had made any progress; and in the last year Mr. Wilberforce's purpose of securing the earliest season of discussion was defeated, first by his own illness, and then by the public danger. The time for a renewal of his motion had at length arrived, and it was under fresh and favourable auspices that he resumed his arms.

It was not to the change of government that the Abolition was indebted for these brighter prospects; though the substitution of a Cabinet, in which it had many warm friends, for one almost wholly hostile, was a favourable circumstance. But the cause of Abolition "had obtained many converts of late years,"[1] through the altered situation of the country. Its failure in 1792 had been occasioned by a fear of French principles, which the conduct of some leading advocates at home had too much countenanced. The House of Commons which was returned in 1796, when this fear was at its height, had been unreasonably but deeply prejudiced against any change in our Colonial system. But the aspect of affairs had now altered. In France, democracy had assumed the less attractive features of military despotism; while the common danger had rendered an unsuspecting spirit of loyalty almost general in Great Britain; and Jacobinism happily was too much discredited either to render to the Abolition her destructive aid, or supply a convenient reproach for its supporters.

Besides this important change, some of the West

[1] Mr. Pitt's speech, May 30.

Indian body had withdrawn or moderated their opposition. When mentioning, early in the year, that he was "about to bring on again the question of Abolition;"[2] "some of the principal West Indians," he says,[3] "begin themselves to relish the idea of suspending the Slave Trade for three or five years. They have not the assurance to pretend to be influenced by any principles of justice, (this is literally true,) but merely by a sense of interest. The soil of Demerara, Berbice, and Surinam, is so fertile that one acre will produce as much as three (generally speaking) in our old islands. There is also in them an inexhaustible store of untilled land, fit for sugar. Consequently, the proprietors of estates, knowing that the demand for sugar is not even now greater than the supply, are afraid lest they should be in the situation of owners of an old and deep mine, who are ruined by the discovery of some other where the ore can be obtained almost on the surface. I can of course consent to no compromise, but I shall rejoice in Africa's having such a breathing time, and I am really in hopes of seeing some fruit of my labours in this field. I shall esteem it one of the greatest mercies if I am permitted to see the dawning of light in Africa; any disposition on our part to withdraw that black cloud by which we have so long shut out from its poor inhabitants the light of Christianity and the comforts of civilization."

[2] To Mrs. H. More, Feb. 21.
[3] To W. Hey Esq. Feb. 11, and April 12

His Diary alludes to the same expectation. "Some of the West Indians now begin to talk of Abolition. They are afraid in general of the cultivation of Demerara and the Dutch colonies, and offer a three years' suspension.[4]—This will probably be moved and carried by Addington, who will be the sober, practical man, in opposition to the wild enthusiasts who are for total Abolition."[5] Early in the spring he was "assured that the great West Indian merchants and planters would be for a five years' suspension. Five or six names given me. They should carry it, it was said, unanimously at a meeting."[6] To further this plan he wrote to Mr. Addington, "urging him to make himself the head of a suspending party for five years."[7] There would be "a disinclination in the minds of the West Indians to accept any proposition I should make . . . and I could not do more than acquiesce in such a proposal . . . I need not say that I do not propose this to you on my own account. It might perhaps to some not be very pleasant to have the chief object and endeavour of their whole public life taken out of their hands. I foresee also that it will be said and believed by the world in general, that I, and others who have been acting with me, have been mere theorists or worse; and a contrast not very favourable to our characters will be drawn to the credit of those who, it will be said, making less ostentatious pretensions are taking the course of true practical humanity.

[4] Diary, Dec. 16, 1803.
[5] Ib. Dec. 24, 1803.
[6] Ib. April 19, 1804.
[7] Diary.

I hope you know me well enough to know that all this I disregard, and it will be some satisfaction to me, in addition to better sources of comfort which I need not mention, to reflect that I may indirectly be contributing to the success of the qualified measure, which, however short of my wishes, may yet be productive of much happiness to mankind."[8]

The honourable and grateful task which he thus proffered, was declined by Mr. Addington "from a natural aversion to come forward just at this moment;"[9] and he soon found that it was in vain to hope for any general support from the West Indian body. At "a general meeting of planters and merchants held at the London Tavern, on the 17th of May, Lord Penrhyn in the chair," the proposal of suspending the Slave Trade during the present war was decidedly rejected, and a large majority acceded to the motion of Mr. Lyon, the agent for Jamaica, "that every legal and proper step should be taken to oppose the progress of any Bill which may be brought into parliament either to suspend or abolish the Slave Trade."

All hopes vanished upon this decision, and the promised concurrence of the planters only served, as it had done four years before, to delay his own proceedings. He determined therefore at once to introduce his motion; but not daring to look forward to entire success, he wished to engage Mr. Pitt to come forward to his succour by proposing the suspension of the Trade. "Called on Pitt, and proposed his

[8] To the Right Hon. H. Addington, May 4. [9] Diary, May 16.

talking with Milligan, and settling plan of suspension with him and other West Indians."[10] To this proposal Mr. Pitt readily agreed, but wrote to him a few days afterwards:—

"My dear Wilberforce,

My conversation with Milligan amounted only to this, that he and other sensible West Indians wished for the suppression; but the great majority would oppose it, many from adherence to former opinion, and more from the fear that if once suspended the Trade could never be revived. In this state, and having had no time to settle any thing with any part of the Cabinet, I see no use in moving the suspension, unless any thing arises in the debate to give a favourable opening for it. It would certainly have been well if there had been a little more time to consult, but I am afraid any delay is impossible.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. P.

"Wednesday, May 30."

He was therefore to renew single-handed this great contest, whilst against him was arrayed a body not stronger for its wealth and numbers, than for the character, talents, and station of many of its members; which extended its influence through the aristocracy of the land, which had a prince of the blood for its avowed advocate in the upper House of parliament,

[10] Diary, May 18.

and above all was supported by men who, like George Ellis, ruled the literary world, and who plainly told him that they "differed from him totally on the great subject of Abolition."[11]

Upon the 30th of May he moved the first reading of his Bill. Though complimented by one of his opponents for his ingenuity in finding new arguments on so hackneyed a subject, he was himself discontented with the spirit with which he introduced the question. "I never felt so discomposed, and stiff, and little at ease on any former occasion, and I own I think I did not do near so well as usual, though the Speaker said he hoped I had satisfied myself, as I had done every body else. The anti-abolitionists made no stand in speaking."[12] They failed no less on a division. "We divided 124 against 49. All the Irish members voted with us. There was a great Irish dinner, 33 or 34 dining together. Lord De Blaquiere gave my health as a toast, and they all came and voted for us. Lee and Lord De Blaquiere spoke and did good. Addington in a speech of one minute opposed us as impracticable, and blindly threw out a Committee. Barham with us. Pitt and Fox a few words. On coming home found Brougham, Stephen, Macaulay, Grant, Henry Thornton, &c. John Villiers came, and he, I, Stephen, Brougham, and William Smith talked over and settled Bill. Stephen and I had more talk afterwards. To bed late."

Thus was the Abolition of the Slave Trade for a

[11] George Ellis Esq. to W. Wilberforce Esq. Aug. 27.
[12] Diary, May 30.

third[13] time voted by the House of Commons; but not as formerly through the hesitating concurrence of a scarce perceptible majority. Its supporters were now as overwhelming in numbers as they had always been in argument. From that night the issue of the question was clear. Accident or artifice might for one or two sessions postpone the triumph, but this alteration in the sober judgment of reflecting men showed that the mists which had obscured the plain demands of right were passing away for ever. "The papers will inform you of our last night's success," writes Mr. Wilberforce to a member of the Old Slave Trade Committee.[14] "Well—the Supreme Disposer of all things can turn the hearts of men, and before him difficulties vanish." The venerable Newton expressed his doubts whether he, who was "within two months of entering upon his eightieth year, should live to see the accomplishment of the work: but the prospect," he adds, "will give me daily satisfaction so long as my declining faculties are preserved." Mr. Wilberforce replied—

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"Palace Yard, Friday.

"My dear Sir,

I steal one moment from business and bustle to thank you most cordially for your kind congratulations. I really scarcely deserve them for not having called on you for so long a time, yet I must do myself the justice to declare, that my having neglected so to

[13] It had passed the House of Commons in 1792, and 1796.
[14] To Rev. J. J. Plymley, (now Archdeacon Corbett,) May 31.

do has in no degree arisen from any want of that affection and esteem which I must ever feel for you. O my dear sir, it is refreshing to me to turn away my eye from the vanities with which it is surrounded, and to fix it on you, who appear in some sort to be already (like Moses descending from the mount) enlightened with the beams of that blessed day which is beginning to rise on you, as you approach to the very boundaries of this world's horizon. May you soon enjoy it in its meridian lustre. Pray for us, my dear sir, that we also may be enabled to hold on our way, and at last to join with you in the shout of victory.

"I fear the House of Lords! But it seems as if He, who has the hearts of all men in his power, was beginning to look with pity on the sufferings of those poor oppressed fellow-creatures whose cause I assert. I shall ever reckon it the greatest of all my temporal favours, that I have been providentially led to take the conduct of this business.

"In extreme haste, I remain, my dear sir,

yours affectionately and sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

These cheerful anticipations were universal. "I sympathize," says Jeremy Bentham,[15] "with your now happily-promising exertions in behalf of the race of innocents, whose lot it has hitherto been to be made the subject-matter of depredation for the purpose of being treated worse than the authors of such crimes are treated, for those crimes, in other places."

[15] To William Wilberforce Esq June 8.

A few days later he sent to Muncaster Castle a full account of what had passed.

"Broomfield, June 4, 1804.

"My dear Muncaster,

Though on all sides, and in all directions, letters are lying around me unanswered, and many of them unread, I must, before I proceed to the liquidation of the vast debt which for above a week has been accumulating, and with many sadly and justly clamorous creditors—I must send you a line or two. Indeed you must have been surprised (I hope not hurt) at my not having written the day after our carrying the first bastion of the Slave Trade citadel; a citadel, the dungeon of which is more foul, dark, and cruel, and containing a far greater number of poor wretched victims of injustice and oppression, than any of Tippoo's Hill Forts, formerly so much talked of. I can assure you my heart was with you (and Burgh also) from the moment of our victory. But, my dear Muncaster, you will enter into my sensations. I could not, I cannot feel any thing of the joys of success, when I know how little we can depend on the continuance of our first advantages, even in the House of Commons, and still more when I look forward to the House of Lords. But on this subject so much pours in upon me, that I must let down the flood-gates, and not permit another drop to come through, except that, though you will be sufficiently indignant against Addington from reading the account of his speechling, (it lasted literally but for about forty seconds,) yet you

would be ten times more indignant if you knew all. I have the satisfaction of reflecting that I acted towards him, in spite of much provocation, like a true friend. I had endeavoured to procure for him, or rather to put him in the way of procuring for himself, the credit of effecting a suspension of the Slave Trade for five years, (while we should have been stigmatized as speculative visionaries, he, on the contrary, being the man of practical humanity, &c.)' To all this, no answer, no hint of what he thought or intended, &c. At last he comes with his wretched repetition of our mode being impracticable. I own I never felt more indignant. But what am I doing? my sheet nearly done, and not one word except on that subject on which I meant to say but three. I will close it, telling you that the Historical Sketches[16] have produced a powerful impression on my mind, on a reperusal.

"It is most true you *never* hear *one* word about invasion, any more than of death or of the day of judgement. Your inference is most just. O Muncaster, Muncaster, I used often to tell you that you thought too highly of one person's talents, of whom, both in point of talents and some moral qualities, I also thought, and still think, more highly than of those of almost any other man. But, as I have often said, 'he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he.' True religion, which makes a man 'keep his own heart diligently,' to use the Scripture expression, gives him further insight

[16] Historical Sketches on the Slave Trade, by Lord Muncaster.

into the hearts of others, and enables him to anticipate conduct and events far better than many superior to him in natural sagacity and acquired knowledge. 'Fear God and keep His commandments, that is the whole duty of man.' I more and more see the truth and force of the proposition.

"Have you seen Bates's Moral Philosophy, or Hall's last fast sermon, "The Sentiments proper to the Crisis." I had nearly forgotten a piece of business on which I have had to write to you for a month past. A friend of mine and Grant's, Mr. Parry, is about to go to the Lakes with his wife and a little girl or two. He is an East India director, a man of practical sense, great piety and benevolence, whom you must love on account of his being incessantly active in works of kindness, &c.—his wife, one of my sister's oldest friends. In one word, I am much interested for them, and desirous of their having every advantage towards a comfortable tour. Let me beg you to allow me to introduce them to you.

"I must stop—farewell. Kind remembrances.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. Alas! at the very time I am writing I am expecting to hear of poor Dick Milnes's death. O my friend, let us be ready. And this reminds me that I had forgot to tell you one circumstance in which you and Mr. Parry are alike; he lost his only son lately, a youth of the utmost promise."

The second reading of the Bill came on upon the

7th of June. "Long discussion. House sat till two. Lord Castlereagh's long anti-speech. Windham against us. I only shortly spoke at last. We carried it 102 to 44,[17] or near it."[18] Other matters of great interest were in progress. Mr. Pitt had entered upon office in the face of bitter and powerful parties. "The old opposition are extremely angry with Pitt for coming in without Fox. Pitt himself thinks Grenville will oppose even more warmly than Fox. They abuse the Chancellor."[19] The whole strength of opposition was mustered against Mr. Pitt's military plan. On the 8th of June, "its second reading came on—only about 40 majority. Opposition, Foxites especially, in high spirits. It seems probable that more have divided against Pitt on this Bill than on any future measure, because already pledged against it while Addington in; but yet the effect of these bad divisions may cause the rats to run, and so pull him down. It is curious, for several weeks not one word said, or even thought, of invasion. It is next to impossible any one topic can long maintain its place in conversation.

"June 15th. House—opposition got the better in a first division by surprise. Pitt very angry and his friends—spoke against time. His second division, only about thirty majority. His next will be no better; but this Bill no test. 18th. House—which very late. Pitt's Militia Bill till half-past four, 265 against 223. Opposition had been very sanguine, and said they

[17] He perhaps took into his calculation some persons who paired off The numbers given in the Parl. Deb. are 100 to 42.

[18] Diary, June 7. [19] Ib.

would carry the question. 22nd. House—which on Lord Advocate's letter. Whitbread's motion—Pitt's and Perceval's honest, manly, and moderate way of taking it. Lord Advocate's own speech most imprudent. Babington and I were partly induced to vote for previous question last night, by considering that Perceval must have overruled, and struggled to get so moderate a measure attended to, and it strengthens or weakens his hands, accordingly as such a one is supported by independent men; if they vote against even that, it is said, 'You see no good is done by your middle terms and your candour.' Canning spoke excellently on Monday; talking at the close of Addington's systematic opposition. Though Addington angry, yet the remark may have done good, and prevent his opposing."

His own Bill meanwhile required his whole attention, as its progress could be secured only by unwearied vigilance. No claims of local interest secured it the attendance of any class of members, while it was opposed by a powerful party with all the expedients either of reason or stratagem. "A great mass of papers has been laid upon the table of the House," said Sir Laurence Parsons;[90] "these ought to be read before the question is decided, and I am sure that even the honourable member who introduced the Bill has not read them." He could reply that "he had read them, and should have thought himself culpable, if he had not looked over documents which had now been a month upon the table, and which were so

[90] Debate of June 7.

intimately connected with a subject in which he felt such particular interest." On the 12th he went "from Broomfield to the House, though very poorly, because the Abolition Bill was coming on." That day it passed the Committee. Next morning he was early "at the parliamentary offices, and the House. Brougham, Stephen, Babington, Henry Thornton, Macaulay, dining with us in Palace Yard most days of the Slave Trade debates. We proceeded to hear counsel on report, when their own friends slipped away, and leaving less than forty, counted us out."[21] On the next occasion on which the subject could be introduced, General Gascoigne inveighed against this delay,[22] and threatened to enforce the order of the day; while Mr. Fuller, who had moved the adjournment, complained of the haste with which Mr. Wilberforce was urging the matter through the House, and quoted as a negro saying, that "Massa King Wilbee wanted to free them, but that the parliament would not let him."

The Bill however, through his constant attention, continued to advance, and two days afterwards he wrote to the member for Waterford,[23] one of its active supporters :—

"Broomfield, Clapham Common, June 22, 1804.

"My dear Sir,

Ecce iterum Crispinus, I fear you will be ready to exclaim on the sight of my hand-writing, but I hope you will suggest to yourself my best excuse, I

[21] Diary, June 13. [22] Debate of June 14. [23] Edward Lee Esq.

mean what is due from me to the great cause, of which I have the honour to be the conductor.

"I happened to hear yesterday that many of the Irish members were intending to leave London almost immediately, and knowing how much our success depends on their support, I confess I heard it with no small concern. Allow me, however, to beg your interest and endeavours in this emergency. We have but two stages remaining, which I hope we shall pass through early in next week. I cannot but hope, therefore, that our Irish friends will not desert us when we are so near the end of our course. I know that our opponents mean to muster all their strength on the third reading. It is important not only to beat them, but to beat them by a considerable majority, with a view to our reception in the House of Lords, both now, (and hereafter if we fail now,) and to the general credit of our cause in the country. Believe me, I would not be thus importunate in any thing which concerned myself personally; but——your own mind, my dear sir, will better supply the rest.

I am, my dear Sir,
your faithful servant,
W. WILBERFORCE."

This was a most critical moment. "June 23rd. The Irish members, who at first all so warm for Abolition, have since been persuaded by some West Indians that it is an invasion of private property. Barham offended by my apparent inattention to him. I wrote him a letter of apology, and all healed. In-

deed, feeling all that was thankful, it was impossible I could mean any thing uncivil. Lord Castlereagh told me that many years ago he had looked into the Slave Trade, and adopted his present opinions. What a cold-blooded creature! Owns he goes all the length, and that Dundas ought now to support us, or not to oppose. Somers Cocks (as well as Fox) the other day gave Pitt a hard knock about his not being in earnest about Abolition, and Sir Robert Buxton (in still worse taste, alas) defended him. I never was so dissatisfied with Pitt as this time."[24] On the 25th, however, when the case was again argued before the House, "Pitt, warming in his speech, moved against hearing counsel as well as evidence, and carried it without a division;"[25] and two days afterwards, the Bill was read for the third time in the House of Commons—"our majority 99 to 33. Samuel and John Smith, &c. most kind in attending, and Attorney-General also. Addington most vexatious;"[26] "yet I am glad that some rather severe remarks I made on him and his warm zeal for Abolition, in which he declared we none of us surpassed him, did not get into the newspapers."[27]

He had now triumphed in the House of Commons, but greater difficulties were behind. He set out for the House, in order to carry up his Bill to the Lords, receiving on his way "a most kind and honourable letter on the subject from Grenville,"[28] in reply to one that he had written the day before.

[24] Diary, June 23. [25] Ib. June 25. [26] Ib. June 27.
[27] To Lord Muncaster, July 6. [28] Diary, June 28.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD GRENVILLE.

" Broomfield, June 27, 1804.

" My dear Lord Grenville,

Though I have been so long in parliament, I was ignorant till yesterday evening, when I accidentally learned it in conversing with the Bishop of London, that in the House of Lords a bill from the House of Commons is in a destitute and orphan state, unless it has some peer to adopt and take the conduct of it.

" So soon as I knew this, your Lordship occurred to me as the natural guardian and protector of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. I know not whether you may happen to recollect, that it was by advice of you and Pitt that I went down to the House of Commons, and gave notice of my intention of bringing forward a proposition on that subject, which in private had long engaged my attention; and you took a leading part in drawing up the resolutions, on which we grounded our measure. Let me earnestly entreat you therefore to undertake this pious charge. Allow me also to say, that as I account it one of the most signal favours of my life, that I have been providentially led to bring forward this cause, so it is personally gratifying to me in the highest degree, to receive the support of any one like your Lordship, with whom I was connected in earlier days, though we have not seen any thing of each other of late; and of whom it has given me sincere pleasure to hear, that your longer acquaintance with life has only tended to make you, in your advancing years, place a higher value on religion, and esteem Christianity not only as

the foundation of our future hopes, but as the only source even of our present happiness.

"What the fate of the Bill may be in the House of Lords I cannot anticipate. I own I am fearful as to the issue in the present session; but on our appearance this year may depend our success in the next: and the effect on our old islands of the growing cultivation of the newly-conquered Dutch settlements, which have already neutralized so many of the West Indian body, may (to use poor Burke's phrase) dulcify them by another session."[29]

Unfavourable news met him at the House. After discussing the subject with one of his brethren, Bishop Porteus told him, that "taking into account the advanced period of the session, the probable sentiments of several leading men in administration, and the absence of by far the greater number of bishops in their respective dioceses," they "extremely doubted whether it would be prudent to risk the Bill this session in the House of Lords. "If," said the Bishop, "as we much fear, it were to be rejected, this would injure the cause, and greatly impede its success another year."[30] This information prepared him for the proposal which was made to him in the House of Lords. "I carried up my Bill. Pitt told me that a meeting had been held of the Cabinet, in which it was agreed that the subject to be hung up till next year, on the ground that the examination of evidence indispensable; that they could make no progress this year,

[29] From a rough copy found among Mr. Wilberforce's papers.
[30] Bishop Porteus to William Wilberforce Esq. June 27.

and that therefore it was better not to bring it on. That it was best for the cause to be regarded as a new question, on the ground of the danger of the colonies; and this more likely to work when some little time for its operation. I felt less at first than when I reflected."[31] "The fact is," he says, "that the House of Lords from their habits would not dispense with the hearing of evidence, and the session was so far advanced that if any vote should be come to, it would only be pledging against us those who possibly might be gained over."[32]

Lord Grenville was of the same opinion. He promised to "be in town to say his say," on the day of discussion, but pronounced it inexpedient to attempt to divide. "The advantage," he says, "which a measure has with us, from being in the hands of one of the leading ministers, is much greater than would be thought by those who do not understand the interior of the machine."[33] "I own," says Mr. Wilberforce,[34] "it quite lowers my spirits to see all my hopes for this year at once blasted, yet *I can't help myself.* To be sure, one session in such a case as this is not much; yet as we know not what may happen in the interval, I tremble lest some insurrection, or other event with two handles, should turn men against us. Still it is a great reconciler that I can't help myself."

Yet there were many cheering indications. "I cannot help thinking," he tells Lord Muncaster,[35]

[31] Diary, June 28. [32] To Lord Muncaster, July 6.
[33] Lord Grenville to William Wilberforce Esq. June 29.
[34] To Rev. Thomas Gisborne, June 28. [35] July 6.

"that we are somewhat advanced on our way; though I am far from being so sanguine as many were, even in 1792. You will I know receive pleasure from hearing your 'Sketches' were of use. The more I reflect upon it, the more I am thankful that Providence graciously conducted me to this great cause. We must now exert ourselves. On the next year much depends. The Almighty alone knows what is to be the issue. It was truly humiliating to see, in the House of Lords, four of the Royal Family come down to vote against the poor, helpless, friendless Slaves. I sometimes think the Almighty can scarcely suffer us to be rid of such a load of wickedness, to which we cling so fondly, without making us suffer for our bigotted attachment. It is often the way of Heaven to let the error bring its own punishment along with it. Well, my friend, it will one day be consoling, that you and I exerted ourselves to clear the ship of this sinking cargo."

While he formed this sober estimate from promising appearances, the expectations of more sanguine men outran the actual issue. "I was glad," wrote Dr. Coulthurst from Yorkshire,[36] "that you went on so triumphantly through the House of Commons. It is thought that in the next session you will succeed in the House of Lords. I am a West Indian, and have some little property there, and I am far from thinking that the Abolition of the Slave Trade will be the ruin of the West Indies; while I think it will very much meliorate the condition of the blacks."

[36] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Oct. 30.

Upon the 2nd of July came on the "second reading of the Bill in the Lords, agreed among government to be postponed." The debate was opened by the Chancellor in a very "threatening speech, because overrating property, and full of all moral blunders, yet amiable in some views. He showed himself to labour with feelings, as if he was the legitimate guardian of property. Lord Stanhope's a wild speech."[37] "With horror I heard that he was about to divide the House. Many of our friends were necessarily absent, and we should have been sadly beat. He gave it up however very kindly on my remonstrance; but his speech contained some most mischievous passages, threatening the Lords, that by means of his stereotype press he would circulate millions of papers amongst the people, and deluge the country with accounts of the cruelties of the Slave Trade, and of the barbarous treatment of the Slaves in the West Indies."[38] "Lord Hawkesbury spoke honourably and handsomely. Westmoreland, like himself, coarse and bullying, but not without talent. Grenville spoke like a man of high and honourable principles, who, like a truly great statesman, regarded right and politic as identical."[39]

The debate closed, according to agreement, with the adjournment of the question to the following session. But though Mr. Wilberforce reluctantly agreed to this arrangement, he did not idly lay aside all present exertion. No branch of the accursed traffic produced greater misery than that which supplied the

[37] Diary. [38] Letter to Lord Muncaster. [39] Diary.

conquered colonies with slaves; and this he proposed to terminate at once, by a resolution of the House of Commons. On this business he "called (July 3rd) on Pitt, who positively said he had no doubt of stopping the Trade by Royal Proclamation. Very strong on this, and against any vote of parliament." On the faith of this engagement, after "a conference in Palace Yard—Brougham, Grant, Babington, William Smith, Henry Thornton, and Macaulay,"[40] he gave up his intended resolution; partly because his "carrying the measure in parliament, if Pitt opposed, would be extremely doubtful;"[41] and partly because such an Act of Parliament, unlike the temporary suspension of the Trade by a Proclamation, would have removed that salutary apprehension of the competition of the virgin soils, which had already so far mitigated the force of West Indian opposition.

The delay which intervened before this promise was redeemed, is the great blot in all Mr. Pitt's treatment of this cause. The Proclamation was promised week after week, and still causelessly delayed. "Let me beg you, my dear Pitt," Mr. Wilberforce wrote, (Sept. 14th,) "to have the Proclamation issued . . . It will not cost you half an hour to settle this. I beg you will remember how much I myself am personally concerned in it; if any other excuse be necessary for my boring you so about it than the merits of the subject itself." In November Lord Harrowby wrote to Mr. Wilberforce, "I am hardly sure that I am not a perjured privy counsellor in telling you that the order

[40] Diary. [41] Letter to Rev. T. Gisborne, June 28

about Surinam, and all other conquered colonies, was actually on the list of council business on Thursday last." Yet another year elapsed before, under the threat of instant parliamentary proceedings, it was actually issued.

Though the progress of this cause during the present year has been detailed without interruption, it must not be supposed that the constant attention it received from Mr. Wilberforce was the single service of a man free from other cares. He was pressed every day by his usual amount of duties, and after entering many "hurrying weeks," says on a Sunday spent quietly at Broomfield, "I feel tired to-day as a man whose general work overdoes him."[42]

He was of too large a heart to be quiet so near London; and the claims of business, of charity, and of hospitable kindness, drew largely upon his time and strength. A few extracts from his Diary will discover these features of his life. "J. R. called and walked with me near an hour. I regretted it, but thought it unfriendly to break off sooner than I did. May 18th. To town betimes. Called Pitt's—warned him about East Indian system of aggrandizement, pursued by Lord Wellesley. Called on relations—dined—settled Apprentice Bill. Babington and Mr. Hobhouse (lawyer) called—and Broomfield, evening. 19th. Breakfast, Mr. Taylor called. Before he gone, Colonel Fullarton came. Before he gone, four Yorkshire clothiers, who staid till near four. Dinner—Bernard,

[42] Diary.

Mrs. Stephen, James Stephen, William Hoare, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thornton, Teignmouths, Cornish, and Macaulay. Much talk with Bernard about Royal Institution and other usefuls—he full of useful, and many of them splendid, projects. J. H. and poor S. out of office. Alas, alas! that there should be such a dereliction of the feelings of friendship.

"May 2nd. Town—City Bible Society general meeting—they forced me to speak. 13th. After much doubt, resolved and went to hear Hall at meeting—very energetic and simply vehement, on 1 Tim. 'Glorious gospel.' He seemed to labour with a sense of the weight and importance of his subject. Truly evangelical also. Excellent indeed—language simple—thoughts just, deep, and often elevated—excelling in experimental applications of Scripture, often with immense effect—begins calmly and simply; warms as proceeds, till vehement, and energetic, and impassioned. All of us struck with him. Simeon with us—his first hearing of Hall. 14th. Breakfasted at Henry Thornton's to meet Hall—Hannah More and Patty. Hall very clever, unaffected, and pleasing in conversation. Town—Hatchard's—Suppression of Vice Society—read their report of proceedings—highly useful. Lord Radstock had in a month got them about 153 members, many of them of high rank. Home—letters—House—dined Carrington's to meet Llandaff, Ferguson, Mahon, &c. Mahon seems well disposed and independent in mind and ways of thinking. I am mistaken if he keeps in the beaten track, and gives up his free agency to the degree it is done,

alas, by the men of the world. Summoned to town on Spanish sequestration business. Saw Pitt for some time, and afterwards Harrowby, and talked with him much about West Indian (Dessalines') cruelties. Back to Broomfield, and dined—Stephen, and Broughams, Teignmouth, &c.

"July 6th. Town. Busy when there, though carried up needlessly—the Sierra Leone business, for which I went, being put off as O. knew; but did not tell me, though I wrote to ask. Pity! this little churlishness. Dined home—Pitt, Lord Camden, Lord Carleton, Rose, Foster, John Villiers, C. Noel, Lord Harrowby—but a dull day. Pitt not in spirits: I very poorly, and doubting about being able to receive them. 9th. After letters, to town, having an appointment with Pitt; who had answered my last letter in a very friendly way—really affectionate, as I am sure I felt and acted towards him. Waited an hour and could not see him—cold meat—and House—Sierra Leone business. Alas! Windham and Dr. Lawrence spoke against it, not having taken the trouble to look into the report or business, and even Francis carried away by T.'s cold way, which really produced a persuasion that the colony had answered worse than it has—then Fuller's ribaldry—but only nine appeared to divide against us, and the rest ashamed." "Town. Sierra Leone Committee. House. Fever Institution. Brougham and Grant dined—much talk. Brougham very unassuming, animated, and apparently well inclined to religion.

"My occupations—many letters—reading Bates's

Rural Philosophy—Otaheite (Encyclopædia)—running over Kett's Elements—Repton's Quarto—Sir W. Jones's Life by Teignmouth:—she not pleased; what a thankless office! 26th. Mr. Richmond with us and Mr. Norton. 27th. Several friends to see Norton at breakfast. Then to London—and back to dinner—C. Hoare, Venn, J. Thornton and Richmond, Dealtry and Norton. 30th. Morning, breakfast—friends about sending the gospel to the Indians. Mr. Norton's Mohawk's dance — Venn, Dealtry, Cookson, John Thornton—much discussion. We are all extremely struck with Mr. Norton, the Mohawk chief (Teyoninhokarawen); his blended modesty and self-possession; his good sense and apparent simple propriety of demeanour. May it be a providential incident thrown in my way to send the gospel to those ill-used people. He again danced his war dance more moderately."

"Broomfield, Aug. 1, 1801.

"My dear Muncaster,

You are a man of by far too lively sensibilities not to have often felt, when you have been thinking of an absent friend, 'perhaps at the very moment in which I am thus reflecting or speaking of him—he is no more.' Have you then seen in the newspapers a paragraph . . Last —— died at Booth Ferry, on her way to the lakes, the wife of Edward Parry Esq.? Yes—so it is, my dear friend. I told you, when I recommended this good man to your friendship, that he had been 'a stricken deer,' and I little expected that

he was again so soon to verify my account of him. Happily Mrs. P. was a woman to whom no death could be sudden, and therefore though called away under circumstances which rendered the event peculiarly affecting to the survivors, (for she was come down with her husband for the first time since her marriage to the place of her birth and early connexions, to a sister especially who loved her almost to extravagance,) she cannot be said to have been taken by surprise. You will not wonder that poor Mr. Parry has changed his course, and has taken his daughters to Scarborough—a mournful party, but 'sorrowing not as those who are without hope,' but as those sustained by the most efficacious of all cordials. I was once myself so nearly in the same situation as to find it needful to have recourse to it. But the Almighty graciously spared me, and allowed me to continue to enjoy my domestic comforts; the best of all this world's blessings.

"I brought this letter to town to-day in the hope of securing a quiet half hour to be allotted to you, but I can barely finish and make up. What a contrast! I am now writing from the very heart of the city of London to you in the very bosom of the happy valley. It makes my mouth water to look to you; but yet you are with me in heart, for I am attending a Committee of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, after having been at a meeting of the Sierra Leone Company. I am sitting at this moment under Sir Francis Burdett's Committee Room. By the way, a friend just now told me, that an honest Baptist in his neighbourhood

had been neutralized by Lord William Russell's driving to him in Leather Lane, with his coach and four, and out-riders, &c. Surely it is to the man's honour that all this magnificence could not *gain* him. Farewell—kind remembrances.

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His own choice would have been a very different life. "Dined quietly," he says,[43] "for the first time this age. How delightful is a little peace in the country!" At times, indeed, as he tells Mr. Hey, he was disposed to seek more quiet by a change of residence. "Broomfield, (I wish you knew it better,)" for even at this moment his hospitable spirit would have added to the crowd of friends around him, "is a scene of almost as much bustle as Old Palace Yard. So much so, that the incessant *worry* (it is an expressive word) of this house makes me think of quitting it, and I should not hesitate for a moment, were it not for our having several valuable friends so near us. The Henry Thorntons, Stephens, Teignmouths, Venn, &c. I consider the neighbourhood in which I fix myself a point of still more importance, now that I am the father of several children. I should scarcely be able to avoid occasional visitings among my neighbours wherever I might live, and what irreparable injury might my young people receive from their accidental conversations with those who by courtesy of language are called friends. I have already dis-

[43] Diary.

covered that children are very sagacious and attentive observers, and shrewd in detecting inconsistencies. Often when they seem to be playing about the room heedless of all that is going forward, it appears afterwards, that they heard and remembered too the conversation which was going forward."

Leaving Broomfield in the beginning of September, he moved with his whole family[44] to Lyme, in Dorsetshire, where he "hoped to enjoy something of to me the greatest of all luxuries, as well as the best of all medicines, quiet."[45] "The place," he tells Mr. Babington,[46] "suits me mightily: a bold coast, a fine sea view—the clouds often shrouding the tops of the cliffs; a very varied surface of ground; a mild climate, and either fresh air or sheltered walks as you please. I allow myself two or three hours open air daily, and have enjoyed more than one solitary stroll with a Testament, a Cowper, or a Psalter, for my companion. Excepto quod non simul esses, &c. I wish you were here, and all your house; but if the presence of some friends would be a most valuable addition, the absence of the multitude of callers is a most valuable loss. We have not had one call since we came." "I never was at any place where I had so much the command of my own time, and the power of living as I please. Only two calls from Justice Tucker."[47] He delighted to exchange the bustle of

[44] His whole family consisted of four sons and two daughters; William, born 1798; Barbara, born 1799; Elizabeth, born 1801; Robert Isaac, born 1802; Samuel, born 1805; Henry William, born 1807.

[45] Letter to Mrs. Hannah More, Sept. 5. Vid. Correspondence, &c.

[46] Sept. 15.

[47] Diary, Dec. 31.

his public life for this domestic privacy. "Here," he breaks off in the midst of a letter to Hannah More, "I am irresistibly summoned to a contest at marbles, and in these days of the rights of man, as I would not furnish any valid ground for rebellion, and remembered I was *at Lyme*, I obeyed the call."[48] He could now too indulge, in some degree, his keen relish of natural beauties, and the common air. He "read much out of doors, and wrote with a pencil,"[49] and "had many a delightful walk along the hoarse resounding shore, meditating on better things than poor blind Homer knew or sung of."[50]

Yet this was no idle time. "I cannot say whence it proceeds," he tells Lord Muncaster, "but my time scarcely ever rolled away so rapidly as it has done at this place. I believe it arises from the comfortable uniformity of my days. In that respect indeed my life here is like my life in London; only the one is uniformity of bustle and interruption, the other uniformity of studious and closet occupations in exchanged with domestic society. Time seems to appear to pass away slowly or rapidly, accordingly as there have been many or few prominent and marked events, which on our looking back occur to our view. When there are many of these, we are, without knowing why, led into conceiving that a considerable time must have elapsed, to afford space for so many incidents; but on the contrary, when very few incidents rise to our view in the retrospect, the period seems

[48] Nov. 22. Vid. Correspondence, &c. [49] Diary.
[50] Letter to Hannah More, Sept. 15. Vid. Correspondence, &c

necessarily a short one. Such are my practical metaphysics.

"You are not however to suppose me idle here, because I am not employed in business of the same kind as that which worries me in town. I scarce ever remember to have been more occupied. A friend has found me a good deal of work in revising an intended publication. I own I am selfish enough to grudge a little the trouble, for it sometimes costs me as much to piece in an addition which I think necessary, as it would to write a new chapter. I have also been scribbling a little thing for the Christian Observer, which I will send you, but you must not mention its author; and another for a similar work, for the benefit of our great cause. Thus I have given you a hint of some of my operations. But my letters are my grand employment; it is shocking to say it, but I brought to this place a box full of unanswered epistles, and each day has supplied a new demand. But surely I am become as great an egotist as the celebrated counsellor himself. Here have I filled all this sheet with an account of myself and my own avocations. It is not however egotism that is censured, but egotism in the wrong place. If I were to entertain the House of Commons with the manner in which I spent my time at Lyme, I should justly become the object of ridicule; but not in writing to a friend, who loves to hook on and run in couples with me through the twenty-four hours, let me be employed how I may."

"Much employed," is the language of his Diary, "in answering an immense arrear of letters, and con-

tinual fresh masses coming in. Wrote an article for the Edinburgh Review;[51] answer to Defence of the Slave Trade on Grounds of Humanity." "You would smile," he tells Mrs. Hannah More, "if you knew how I am now employed."[52] "Also for Christian Observer—a review of Lord Chatham's Letters, with which I took pains; a paper on Baxter; and another introductory to a Narrative Series. Much of the morning spent in looking over Stephen's manuscript, and Hannah More's intended publication on the Education of a Princess, and adding a good deal of new matter. Read Barrow's Africa, New Testament in Greek, some of Miss Edgeworth's Moral Tales for relaxation, plays, a little poetry, Guardian, De Retz's Memoirs. Also hearing Brougham's Colonial Policy."[53] "Manifestly the *launcher*, and a capital one too, of a shrewd man of the world."[54] "Corresponding with Lord Harrowby, Brougham, and others."

This correspondence is full of interest. Mr. Brougham had offered "to shape"[55] his "course in a continental tour exactly so as to make" his "exertions of use to the great question of Abolition. This I might do by procuring information in Holland, as to two points. First, the analogy of the Maroons of Guiana, . . for facts will be brought forward which we cannot meet from the old evidence—such as, those which concern the influence of neigh-

[51] Mr. Jeffrey enforced the usual payment, with his standing allusion to Peter the Great.

[52] Sept. 28. Vid. Correspondence, &c. [53] Diary.

[54] William Wilberforce Esq. to James Stephen Esq. Dec. 19.

[55] Letter from Henry Brougham Esq. July 5.

bouring rebellion upon our slaves... The experience of the Dutch in matters relating to Maroon war and its effects on the neighbouring slaves might be fairly set against that of our Jamaica men. Secondly, the grounds upon which the Dutch government still clings to the trade. Perhaps that far-sighted people, anxiously occupied as they are at present with colonial discussions, may have discovered their true interests; or at least may be opening their eyes to the dangers of their situation. Next I am perfectly willing, after leaving Holland, to go through any part of Germany which bids fair to offer information. I know from good authority that the state of the European peasantry will be copiously referred to, and will be urged as a parallel case from common notoriety, and requiring no positive proof. All the proof is indeed the other way, but it will be a matter of some difficulty to bring it forward specifically. I do not, however, despair of succeeding when I reach the spot; and if Germany is not enough, I will most cheerfully go to the great scenes of bondage, (as it is called,) Poland, Russia, and Hungary."

Mr. Brougham was now travelling as an American, and often at some personal risk; "I hear of him as quartered for a week in the same house with several French generals," [56] to prosecute these inquiries throughout Holland. The Dutch, whose Slave Trade was suspended by the war, were willing to agree to immediate Abolition, if Mr. Pitt would send them "four lines expressing his private and individual sentiments

[56] W. Wilberforce Esq. to James Stephen Esq.

as to the effects of the Dutch Abolition in removing the grand preliminary obstacles to the restoration of the conquered colonies." [57] No English minister could give such a pledge. "It would not at all surprise me," says Mr. Brougham,[58] "nor in the least diminish my conviction of Mr. Pitt's sincerity, nor at all change my fixed opinion of his superiority in talents and greatness of views, were he at once to refuse having any thing to do with the business." Yet Mr. Pitt appears, from a letter of Lord Harrowby's,[59] not to have been altogether disinclined to entertain the subject. Mr. Brougham's communications with the Dutch authorities give a lively picture of the state of Abolition prospects; and show that their speedy victory was not the effect of any passing feelings, or of official favour. "Le delai du Bil," he says, when alluding to the repulse of the past spring, "a été causé par quelques formalités qui sont necessaires dans la Chambre haute quand il est question d'une loi qui touche directement aux intérêts des particuliers. On a passé le Bil dans la Chambre basse par des pluralités des voix tout à fait inouïes, quelquefois même en raison de *neuf à une.* Les avocats de la traite ont avoué hautement que c'en est fait de la question: et les negociants de Londres, de Liverpool, et de Bristol ont pris toutes leurs démarches depuis la decision de la Chambre sur le pied d'une Abolition subite et certaine."

[57] Henry Brougham Esq. to James Stephen Esq. Sept. 7.
[58] Henry Brougham Esq. to W. Wilberforce Esq. Dec. 27.
[59] To William Wilberforce Esq. Oct. 11. Vid. Correspondence, &c.

The Abolition business was now Mr. Wilberforce's chief care. The expected struggle of the following session made the most patient forethought absolutely necessary. Every part of the question was passed in review before him, and he was especially "meditating on the preparation of the African part, for the House of Commons." Thus he was enabled to arrange the general conduct of the question, and allot to several hands important matters for present consideration. "I think it highly probable," he says to Mr. Stephen, "that we shall all agree finally, that it will be most prudent not to adduce evidence before the House of Lords; but don't let us be rash in determining; rather let us quietly hunt out for witnesses."[60]

Mr. Stephen was already at work, and the opening sheets of his pamphlet were transmitted to Lyme for correction. "Have you sent me," Mr. Wilberforce asks,[61] "all that you have yet done? I have nearly read it through once, and I am obliged chiefly to use my own eyes at it. I will say not a word till I have got through all that you have sent, except, that it has made my heart ache." For this work he furnished "calculations as to the decrease in the number of the slaves, which I remember to have gone through formerly with Pitt and Grenville."

This work he thought promised to be "eminently useful," though he wished its plan enlarged. "Stephen's work," he writes to Mr. Macaulay,[62] "will make Africa a secondary object, and on that ground alone, the effect produced upon the reader's mind would not

[60] To J. Stephen Esq. Oct. 10. [61] Ib. Nov. 27. [62] Dec. 17.

in my view of things be satisfactory. Again, there is always danger to be apprehended from embarking all your stock in one bottom. Many persons are apt, after reading awhile, to take up some crotchet, or mode of interpretation, or some other conceit of principle, which prevents their fairly appreciating the amount of the writer's facts and arguments. Perhaps he contradicts the statements some foolish fellow of their acquaintance, who has travelled, has made to them as of his own experience, or what is worse, he contradicts perhaps their own; and afterwards all facts which do not accord with their theory are supposed fallacious. This is only an instance, but the observation I am persuaded is just. Ergo, there should be an African work. Different parts of it must be assigned to different labourers; and to provide for something like uniformity, a number of propositions (of which I will subjoin a specimen) should be given out to our several white negroes. Stephen is perhaps right in confining himself to proofs dra vn from the admission of opponents. I will send you tomorrow a more particular statement of the part of the work I can myself undertake. I will levy a contribution on Lord Muncaster of some extracts from the authors mentioned in his Historical Sketches. Another white negro has occurred to me, who would do a great deal of work; I mean Mr. Thomas Clarkson. Could you not assign him a task; for instance, that of looking through a certain book, and extracting all it contains in proof of certain propositions?" "Let a list," he says, "of all the topics and questions

for which the classical writers should be consulted, be given to the young Grants. I am persuaded Robert Grant will most cheerfully aid us with his familiar acquaintance both with the languages and the writers of antiquity. He will thus contribute his share towards the great work of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. And the day will come when to have been permitted to take a part in that *holy war*, will be regarded as an honour and a blessing."[63]

He proceeded at once to levy his threatened contribution from Lord Muncaster.

"Lyme, Dec. 18, 1804.

"My dear Muncaster,

Shall I begin by thanking you or scolding you? On Lord Carhampton's reasoning about flogging, (viz. that both preaching and flogging were not fair,) you will object to my right to scold, if I mean to end by fining you. But I am a little imitating the example of Rhadamanthus, in making the castigation precede the statement of the offence; and perhaps I may, after all, give some cause for believing that I am following the African practice, (as evil communications corrupt good manners,) and am only accusing you of an offence that I may profit from your punishment. Your crime then, if you must know it, is that you have answered my queries in a loose, general way, which though it might do well enough for *talk*, is not precise enough for my purpose. And the fine which, in the plenitude of my

[63] Letter to J. Stephen Esq. Nov. 28.

power, I think fit and (African again) *find necessary* to impose, is a number of extracts from certain authors, whom you have in your possession, and whose works I doubt if we can get readily, even in London.

"The fact is this—my good brother-in-law, Mr. Stephen, to whose pamphlets you so justly gave no little praise, is at work on another, the object of which is to exhibit the true picture of West Indian negro Slavery, and to argue for Abolition. He is so hard run for time, that he will not be able to get through the African part of the case; which always did, and in my mind always will, form the strength of it. He means to argue only from the concessions or evidence of our opponents, and from the documents they have supplied. Now we may fairly claim to have the writings of all such travellers or historians as were connected in any way with the African trade, as of that description. But even such of them as were unconnected with it, being at least not connected with Abolitionists, and having published their works long before Abolition was talked of, are unexceptionable witnesses. There is therefore no branch of proof on which I place more reliance than on the publications of such authors as those whom you quoted in the Historical Sketches; and as I see Stephen will not be able to get through this part of the subject, I have resolved, that late as it is, with the help of friends, I will bring forth a statement of the African part of our case, to which, better at least than any other now extant, I may refer such men as the Lord Chancellor, Lord Ellenborough, &c. if they

ask me where they are to look for such facts and arguments as I think ought to enforce conviction. If there had been time for it I should gladly have accepted your kind offer of packing up all your African travellers, and sending them off to London; but I see plainly that they would arrive too late; besides that Macaulay or Stephen, who would have to look them over, being entire strangers to them, and being turned loose into such a mare magnum, (to use Lord Melville's old phrase,) would never find their way in time to the destined points, and bring back a profitable cargo. But you, my dear friend, knowing the books so well, and having again and again turned them over, would at once be able to discover the parts which are really valuable, and at one quarter of the labour would in less time obtain for us what would far better answer our purpose. Perhaps your daughters would help you in copying; and what I could wish is that you should send me extracts, such as those of the Historical Sketches, calculated to prove certain propositions, or disprove others. At the end of every extract, the place in the book and the book from which it is taken must be carefully and distinctly noted down; a piece of precision not always attended to in the Historical Sketches; which however I remember to have been written currente or rather volante Calamo, and therefore I wonder not at any such omission.

"The books from which I am anxious that you should send us the best extracts you can procure are those which you have yourself quoted; Bosman, Labat, and some of the older authors whose works I

fear we cannot readily meet with: viz. Artus of Dantzic, Ogelby, Nyendael, Dapper, and Desmarchais.

"The points, or topics, or propositions, to which I wish your inquiries to be directed, I will put down on a paper by themselves. Let me only now proceed to add, that while, with the freedom of a friend, I have thus presumed to cut out such a piece of work for you, I yet, with equal sincerity, beg you not to undertake it unless you are so circumstanced as to be able to do it without inconvenience. I think, however, I need not say to you, that though in any instance which was to be of real service to me, I know your warm heart too well not to be sure that you would resent any apologies I should offer for calling on you to assist me; yet that I apply to you on the present occasion, on a higher principle; as one whom I know to be interested for the much-injured Africans, to be enlisted, as it were, in their cause, and to be determined to use all lawful means for wiping away the foulest blot which ever stained our national character. In truth, my dear Muncaster, amid the many, many mercies, for which I have reason to be thankful to a gracious Providence, I often think it is one, and not the least, that I have been honoured with the foremost place among those who have taken part in this holy warfare. May the Almighty hear our prayer, and put a period to that system of wickedness and cruelty in which our country has too long been the chief agent. I fear, however, that the Supreme Being is taking the matter into His own hands, and that He will bring about the same ends by means far more terrible. We deserve

the worst which we can suffer. Let me only remind you once more, my dear friend, that time is most precious to us, and therefore, whatever you do—cito.

"My eyes are tired, and I must still scribble the propositions; so begging my kind remembrances to Lady Muncaster,

I am ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. I beg you will tell your daughters, with my respects, that they will reflect as long as they live with pleasure, on any time or pains they may expend in behalf of the poor Africans.

PROPOSITIONS TO BE PROVED BY EXTRACTS FROM AFRICAN TRAVELLERS.

"A. The African negroes not inferior to the natives of other countries, under similar circumstances, in intellectual or moral qualities. There is nothing either in their understandings, or hearts, or tempers, which makes it impossible to civilize them—

"2. or establish a commercial connexion with them. Contra, they are naturally ingenious, commercial, &c.

"B. The Slave Trade is the source of great misery to Africa—

"1. by producing or prolonging wars.

"2. by causing the chiefs to commit acts of depredation on their own subjects or their neighbours—village breaking.

"3. by causing innumerable acts of individual depredation, as kidnapping, &c.

"C. The Slave Trade produces unjust convictions for crimes, excessively severe punishments, prosecutions for witchcraft, &c.

"2. The Slave Trade has gradually rendered the penal code of Africa, from being mild, very severe.

(This you proved admirably.)

"D. The Slave Trade renders person and property insecure in Africa, and thereby is a standing obstruction to civilization.

"E. It is not true that the Slave Trade prevents on the whole much misery; captives being killed, &c.

"F. It is not true that the slaves if not bought by the Europeans would be murdered, instead of being set to work.

"G. It is not true that slaves are ill off in their own country, or worse off than in the West Indies.

"H. The Slave Trade corrupts the morals of the Africans, so that they are rendered the worse, not the better, for their connexion with us.

"My way commonly is to mark with the letter which belongs to each proposition, each passage which proves it as I go along, and then to extract and bring

together all the extracts which belong to each head. I shall be anxious to have a line from you. If on reflection any more propositions occur, I will send them to-morrow. Good night.

" P. S. If you are so situated (as must often happen to a man whose house is never apt to be empty) as not to be able to spare any time for work, only let me beg you, without a moment's loss of time, to send the books to Macaulay; except perhaps one or two to Dr. Burgh at York, whom I will prepare."

Three months had passed happily away in these employments, and the session of parliament was soon to recommence. " We have enjoyed," he tells Mr. Babington, " much domestic happiness, and I grow very fond of so quiet a life, and turn with disgust from the noise and turmoil of a London life. However, I would remember to keep always mindful of the apostle's words, ' Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'" Politics had been almost banished from Lyme, or reached it only as a distant sound. "You will not expect," he wrote to Lord Muncaster, " to hear any politics from *hence*." " Pitt," he told Hannah More, " is indefatigable in attending to the defence of the country; he really is doing much in that way. I own I have my fears about our continental politics." The plans which were then before the Cabinet, and at which he looked with this foreboding, were those which issued during the following campaign in the disastrous battle of Auster-

litz. "Our language with foreign courts is, that if they will in good earnest fall to work, we will help them with all our means, money, &c.; but that we will not thank them for half measures." These designs he communicated more fully in a letter to Mr. Bankes.

TO HENRY BANKES ESQ.

"Oct. 4, 1804.

"My dear Bankes,

I saw Pitt not very long ago, and then his language concerning continental connexions was very much what you and I should wish, except that it indicated in our court a greater willingness to subsidize than I rather think you would approve. I know not how to rejoice in his expectations, unless there should appear some far more close bond of union, and more efficient instruments of offensive operation, than we have hitherto witnessed.

"I should not greatly wonder if France were to break forth again, and overflow her banks in another direction, and add other large territories to her permanent empire. Still all is uncertain. In truth all is in higher hands. I own I should best like adopting some effectual and economical means of defence, which, if necessary, we could manifestly continue for years; and then my persuasion is, that our enemy would be sick of the contest, and what is more, we should be less likely to get into another.

"Pitt is the most upright political character I ever knew or heard of; but with all public men it is ex

tremely dangerous for a country that they should be under a temptation to fight it out, to try their fortune again after having been unsuccessful in a former war. Their own character and glory, and the national interest, are so apt to become identified in their judgment, that they are too forward to consider as conducive to the latter whatever measures they are prompted to undertake from their solicitude for the former. I was glad to hear that the King was pretty well, though it was more represented in the way in which we speak of a man who, being strongly suspected of being insane, we are surprised when he does not act very irrationally.

My dear Bankes,

yours most sincerely and affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The 1st of January, 1805, found him "too busy to write much, yet desiring to record the goodness of the Lord; His great forbearance and long-suffering; His kindness during the last year in preserving us and our dear children, and enabling us to enjoy so much domestic happiness and social comfort, especially at this place. But I must stop and go to prayer."

This quiet happiness was speedily disturbed. Upon the 5th of January he "heard from Pitt that an opposition was expected the first day of the session," and judged "it right to come up." Mr. Pitt's summons was brief and earnest.

"Downing Street, Jan. 4, 1805.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I have hardly time for more than one word, and that word I am afraid must be '*Come*,' though I say so with reluctance under the circumstances you mention. But by my last accounts, opposition is collecting all its force, and it is therefore very important that we should secure as full an attendance as possible. There are a great many points on which I shall be very impatient to talk with you, but on which I have no time to write. Harrowby is out of all danger, but his general health, I am sorry to say, will make it impossible for him to encounter any longer the fatigues of his office. The loss of his assistance will be a great misfortune, but we must do as well as we can. The person whom on the whole I think best to succeed him is Mulgrave.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. P."

This call he at once obeyed, casting only one lingering look at the peaceful quietness which he was leaving. "If it were not best to acquiesce cheerfully and entirely in the will of God, I should grieve at being so poorly to-day, because it is probably my last Sunday before I go to London to engage in the hurly-burly scene I there dwell in. I feel like one who is about to launch into a stormy sea, and who knows from fatal experience how little his own powers are equal to its buffetings. O Lord, do Thou fit me

for it. Enable me to seek Thy glory, and not my own; to watch unto prayer; to wait diligently on God; to love Him and my Redeemer from the heart; and to be constrained by this love to live actively and faithfully devoting all my faculties and powers to His service, and the benefit of my fellow-creatures. Especially let me discharge with fidelity and humility the duties of my proper station, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; submitting patiently to the will of God, if it be His will that we should be defeated in our effort to deliver our country from the load of guilt and shame which now hangs round her neck, and is, perhaps, like a gangrene, eating out her vital strength, and preparing, though gradually, the consummation of her ruin. O Lord, do Thou lead and guide me.

"On looking back, what sad proofs have I had lately of the inward workings of ambition, on seeing others, once my equals, or even my inferiors, rise to situations of high worldly rank, station, power, and splendour! I bless God, I do not acquiesce in these vicious tempers, but strive against them, and not, I hope, in vain. Remember, O my soul, no man can serve two masters. Have I not a better portion than this world can bestow? Would not a still higher situation place both me and my children in less favourable circumstances for making our calling and election sure? Covet not then, O my soul, these objects of worldly anxiety. Let God be thy portion, and seek the true riches, the glory and honour which are connected with immortality. Yet turn not from those who have these honours with cynical or envious malignity, but rejoice

in their temporal comfort and gratification, while you pray for them, and strive to do them good by preventing them from being injured by their exaltation."[64]

He reached Broomfield upon the 12th of January, "Through God's good providence we are all returned in peace and safety; and now, before I plunge into the stormy sea I am about to enter, I would pray to God through Christ, by the Holy Spirit, to strengthen me with might in the inner man; to enable me to walk by faith, to let my light shine before men, and to become meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. O my soul, remember thy portion is not here. Mind not high things. Be not conformed to this world. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and delight thyself in God. Let the men of this world pass by thee in the race of honours, but thine be the honour which cometh of God, thine the glory which is connected with immortality."[65]

The following morning he "called on Pitt, who told me of the offer of negociation from Buonaparte. His schemes large and deep. His hopes sanguine."[66] "Parliament met on Tuesday, but Fox neutralized by Windham and Grenville, and so said nothing of what he would otherwise have given us."[67] The scene was again shifting on the busy stage of politics. "You will, I know," he heard from Mr. Pitt,[68] "be glad, independent of politics, that Addington and I have met as friends; but I hope

[64] Journal, Jan. 6. [65] Ib. Jan. 13.
[66] Diary, Jan. 14. [67] Ib. Jan. 15.
[68] Right Hon. William Pitt, to William Wilberforce Esq.

you will also not be sorry to hear that that event will lead to political re-union." He was extremely pleased with this reconciliation between "two friends who had no public ground of difference." He was gratified too by Mr. Pitt's anxiety to acquaint him with it. "It showed me that he understood my real feelings." Upon the 1st of February he "called on Pitt, and walked with him round the Park. Pleased with his statements of disposition not to quarrel with Addington."[69] "'I am sure,' he said, 'that you are glad to hear that Addington and I are at one again.' And then he added, with a sweetness of manner which I shall never forget, 'I think they are a little hard upon us in finding fault with our making it up again, when we have been friends from our childhood, and our fathers were so before us, while they say nothing to Grenville for uniting with Fox, though they have been fighting all their lives.'"[70]

In spite of the accession of Lord Sidmouth's partisans, Mr. Pitt felt that his majorities were feeble, and wished to put aside all questions which could divide his friends. On this ground he pressed earnestly by private remonstrance for the postponement of the Abolition question; but Mr. Wilberforce would never "make that holy cause subservient to the interest of a party;" and being convinced by the experience of the former session, that he must begin at once if he would carry any measure through the House of Lords, on the 6th of February he gave notice of his motion. Mr. Pitt could estimate

[69] Diary, Feb. 1. [70] Con. Mem.

his motives—he "called upon me and was very kind about it."[71] The Bill was "read a first time on the 19th, and the second reading fixed for the Thursday se'nnight."[72] He had no fears about the House of Commons, but that night brought one of those reverses, by which his constancy was so often tried during the twenty years of this hard struggle. After a "morning of business as usual," and "eating at home in a hurry," he went down to the House on the "second reading of the Abolition Bill. I said nothing at opening, and not enough at the close, but did not expect such an issue. Besides, felt as if I could not go well. Beat, alas, 70 to 77. Sad work! Though I thought we might be hard run from the face of the House, I could not expect the defeat, and all expressed astonishment. The Irish members absent, or even turned against us. Foster however, who was absent, not I believe from fault, was for us. Lord De Blaquiere, Sir. I. Stewart, Sir I. Newport, voted with us. Some Scotch I believe, who last year neutral, voted against us. Great canvassing of our enemies, and several of our friends absent through forgetfulness, or accident, or engagements preferred from lukewarmness."[73] His usual supporters, Mr. Fox alone excepted, were silent, though Mr. Huddlestone came forward to refute the arguments for the Slave Trade drawn from the East Indies, and Mr. Barham to show that some true liberality was connected with the West; while the defenders of the Trade brought forward their oft re-

[71] Diary, Feb. 7. [72] Ib. Feb. 19. [73] Ib. Feb. 28.

futed fallacies with a wearisome pertinacity, varied only by charges of hypocrisy against their main antagonist, whom they endeavoured to resign, as "a citizen of France," to the "fraternal hug of the president of the Jacobins."

This failure pained him deeply. "I never felt so much on any parliamentary occasion. I could not sleep after first waking at night. The poor blacks rushed into my mind, and the guilt of our wicked land."[74] Yet he had no doubts of his ultimate success. Shortly after the division, he was addressed by Mr. Hatsell, the sagacious and experienced clerk of the House of Commons—"Mr. Wilberforce, you ought not to expect to *carry* a measure of this kind. You have a turn for business, and this is a very creditable employment for you; but you and I have seen enough of life to know that people are not induced to act upon what affects their interests by any abstract arguments." "Mr. Hatsell," he replied, "I *do* expect to carry it, and what is more, I feel assured I shall carry it speedily. I have observed the gradual change which has been going on in men's minds for some time past, and though the measure may be delayed for a year or two, yet I am convinced that before long it will be accomplished." "I bless God," are his private reflections on the Sunday following this disappointment,[75] "that I feel more than of late I have done, that humble, peaceful, confiding hope in the mercy of God, reconciled in Christ Jesus, which tranquillizes the mind, and creates a desire after that

[74] Diary, March 1. [75] Journal, March 3.

blessed state, where we shall be completely delivered from the bondage of our corruptions, as well as from all our bodily pains and sicknesses, and all our mental anxieties and griefs; where the injustice, oppression, and cruelty, the wickedness, the falsehood, the selfishness, the malignity, of this bad world shall be no more; but peace, and truth, and love, and holiness, shall prevail for ever. O Lord, purify my heart, and make me meet for that blessed society. Alas, how sadly do I still find myself beset by my constitutional corruptions! I trust the grief I felt on the defeat of my Bill on Thursday last, proceeded from sympathy with the wretched victims, whose sufferings are before my mind's eye, yet I fear in part also less pure affections mixed and heightened the smart—regret that I had not made a greater and better fight in the way of speaking; vexation at the shame of the defeat. O Lord, purify me. I do not, God be merciful to me, deserve the signal honour of being the instrument of putting an end to this atrocious and unparalleled wickedness. But, O Lord, let me earnestly pray Thee to pity these children of affliction, and to terminate their unequalled wrongs; and O direct and guide me in this important conjuncture, that I may act so as may be most agreeable to Thy will. Amen."

On the following day he told Lord Muncaster—

"London, March 4, 1805.

"Alas, my dear Muncaster, from the fatal moment of our defeat on Thursday evening, I have had a damp struck into my heart. I could not sleep

either on Thursday or Friday night, without dreaming of scenes of depredation and cruelty on the injured shores of Africa, and by a fatal connexion diffusing the baleful effects through the interior of that vast continent. I really have had no spirits to write to you. Alas, my friend, in what a world do we live! Mammon is the god we adore, as much almost as if we actually bowed the knee to his image. I was in the situation of Lord Cornwallis in Virginia, where I remember his stating himself 'to be among lukewarm friends, and active enemies.' Self-interest is a principle of sure and permanent operation. Justice and humanity are not so continually on the watch. Many of our friends, more than enough to have turned the scale in their favour, were absent. Still I will do all I can. If we cannot stop the whole of this accursed traffic, it is much to stop half of it; and I am resolved to do what I can, I repeat it. But I will write more another day. I only wished to send you a line because I am sure you will feel, till you hear from me, solicitous, kindly solicitous, on my personal account. I am almost ashamed of being so well and so comfortable, when I think of the misery of my poor clients: and there are just now papers from Lord Seaforth, Governor of Barbadoes, and an anti-abolitionist, giving a detailed account of three murders of slaves under circumstances of atrocity too shocking to relate; and his Lordship adds, there are several more which he does not specify, &c. I will try to send you them, though they will make your heart ache. But farewell; I am hurried beyond measure. Shall we not see you

this spring? I thought you were to come up with your ladies. Every blessing attend you.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

To do what he could by stopping importation to the conquered colonies was his immediate business. "Having written to Pitt strongly on the Guiana Slave Trade three days before," he was "to see him on the 9th of March." In this interview "I declared that I must positively bring it into the House, and with opposition—concert, and combination, as also foreign Slave Trade, and Trinidada."[76] To this measure he was manifestly forced. "Many persons excuse themselves for not voting with me on the ground of Pitt's not meaning it to be carried. But not an honest reason. Sheridan, Aubrey, &c.—it is the Prince of Wales's attachment. Attorney-General Perceval honest, warm, steady, and intelligent on the subject." Three days later he "discussed with Stephen and Babington about Guiana regulations," having "heard from Pitt, that government did unanimously agree to stop that trade, and that he wished me to prepare regulations."[77] Yet still he judged it right to provide against the fatal delay of the preceding year; and for this purpose attended a "meeting about Abolition at Lansdown House, Lord Henry Petty's. It was intended to rouse, and animate, and call forth more active support by informing, and thereby interesting, the public. Fox, Grey, Lord R.

[76] Diary. [77] Ib. March 11.

Spencer, Ward, Ossulston, &c.; Hobhouse, and Thorntons, Babington, Spencer Stanhope, Bankes, (most kindly,) Barham, &c. Opposition preponderated. Bankes and I charged with message to Pitt, whether he would effect Guiana Abolition, or we should."[78] At a second meeting, held a few days afterwards, "Lord Henry Petty agreed to move for the Abolition of the Foreign Slave Trade," while Mr. Bankes and himself "delivered Pitt's answer, that government would, by Order of Council, stop the Guiana and Surinam Trade, except for keeping up stock."[79]

The rejection of the Abolition Bill was speedily succeeded by a harassing and painful question. Rumour had for some time impeached Lord Melville's integrity. In February Mr. Wilberforce "had much talk with Rose about him. Rose is confident Pitt will defend him, though he tells me some stories (and strong ones) of jobs which have fallen under his own[80] view. He says the Bishop of Lincoln will not mention such matters to Pitt."[81]

As nothing definite was known, all eyes watched eagerly for the Report of the commissioners of naval inquiry, who had been examining this very charge. "Melville had not mentioned the matter to Pitt, Huskisson, or any human being till the Report was printed."[82] No one looked for its appearance more anxiously than Mr. Pitt. Mr. Wilberforce was "at his office about the Guiana Slave Trade" when "the

[78] Diary, March 29. [79] Ib. April 4. [80] Rose's.
[81] Diary, Feb. 16. [82] Ib. March 29.

Tenth Report" came "out, and Pitt was reading it for the first time."[83] "I shall never forget the way in which he seized it, and how eagerly he looked into the leaves without waiting even to cut them open."[84] The Tenth Report distinctly convicted Mr. Trotter, Lord Melville's deputy paymaster, of a misapplication of the public money, and warranted a strong suspicion that he had acted with the connivance of his principal. Public character evidently required that such offences should be dealt with on the strictest rules of justice. But party spirit thrust itself upon the seat of judgment. Opposition seized eagerly so fair an opportunity of unseating government; and Mr. Pitt was tempted to act the part of an advocate, rather than a judge. Mr. Wilberforce vainly pressed upon him a more becoming line of conduct. "Bankes and I saw him on Melville's business—we talked with him above an hour. Bankes very frank, and Pitt very good-humoured. It is melancholy to see Pitt's excellent understanding so befooled by less worthy associates. He evidently thinks that it may shake the government. Thinks gaining time for men's minds to cool may do much."[85]

Administration indeed could ill afford to lose the shrewd and practical talents of Lord Melville. But though it had its weight, this was not the chief cause of Mr. Pitt's present conduct. Still less was it, as was commonly supposed, the mere effect of personal attachment. "How little is men's conduct fairly judged of in the world! hereafter it will be thought that Pitt and

[83] Diary, March 18. [84] Con. Mem. [85] Diary.

all who voted for him were Melville's friends."[66] It was far from being true. "I had perceived above a year before, that Lord Melville had not the power over Pitt's mind, which he had once possessed. Pitt was taking me to Lord Camden's, and in our tête-à-tête he gave me an account of the negociations which had been on foot to induce him to enter Addington's administration. When they quitted office in 1801, Dundas proposed taking as his motto, Jam rude donatus. Pitt suggested to him that having always been an active man, he would probably wish to come again into office, and that then his having taken such a motto would be made a ground for ridicule. Dundas assented, and took another motto. Addington had not been long in office, before Pitt's expectation was fulfilled, and Dundas undertook to bring Pitt into the plan, which was to appoint some third person head, and bring in Pitt and Addington on equal terms under him. Dundas accordingly, confiding in his knowledge of all Pitt's ways and feelings, set out for Walmer Castle; and after dinner, and port wine, began cautiously to open his proposals. But he saw it would not do, and stopped abruptly. 'Really,' said Pitt, with a sly severity, and it was almost the only sharp thing I ever heard him say of any friend, 'I had not the curiosity to ask what I was to be.'"[67]

But whatever alienation there had been before, it was now increased to actual coolness. "While it was generally thought that Pitt defended Melville out of friendship, I knew that they were scarcely upon

[66] Diary. [67] Con. Mem.

speaking terms."[88] Pitt had been wounded by his conduct, in the very point where he was tenderest; his own honour had been trifled with, and his confidence abused. "Some years before, Mr. Raikes[89] had hinted to him, that the public money was illegally employed. Dundas soon after coming in, Pitt said to him at once, 'Dundas, here has been Tom Raikes to me with a long story of your way of employing the public money; what does he mean?' Dundas assured him that it was their mistake, and that no money had been drawn except for public service. When therefore the fact came out, Pitt seemed to a degree involved in Melville's fault."[90] "In truth Pitt was chiefly led into supporting Melville by that false principle of honour, which was his great fault—he fancied himself bound in honour to defend one who had so long acted with him."[91] He was of course persuaded of Lord Melville's personal integrity. "Pitt says he is quite sure that there was no real pocketing of public money in him. All say that he has acted like a fool, though so able at other times."[92]

Such rules of conduct could not satisfy one who acted upon higher motives. Honour and party spirit afforded him no standard. "I have difficult and trying questions before me in parliament," is the language of his private Journal; "I will pray for wisdom, and pursue the path presented by conscience, and then peace will follow. Lord, give me wisdom. Do Thou enable me to act, to-morrow, honestly and

[88] Con. Mem. [89] The Governor of the Bank. [90] Con. Mem.
[91] Ib. [92] Diary, April 3

uprightly, without fear of man or any other unlawful motive. O Lord, give me Thy wisdom, and set me above this world and all that it contains." He felt deeply the importance of maintaining, at all costs, a high standard of integrity in public men; and viewed with peculiar indignation any tendency in parliament to screen such delinquents for party purposes. Thus in the debate on the debt of Mr. Fordyce,[93] he bitterly complains of "the most shabby conduct of opposition, because Lords Rockingham and North concerned—Crevey shied off—Pitt rather high."[94] This led him in Lord Melville's case to a strict and judicial scrutiny of all the charges. And when upon the 8th of April, Mr. Whitbread moved the Resolutions for censuring Lord Melville, he watched anxiously the course of the debate, hoping that some valid arguments might be urged in his defence. None such were brought forward, and at last he rose reluctantly to press upon the House the claims of justice. He sat upon the continuation of the Treasury bench, and as he turned towards the chair, looked just across Mr. Pitt, who was watching with intense earnestness to catch the first intimation of the line which he would take. "It required no little effort to resist the fascination of that penetrating eye—from which Lord Erskine was always thought to shrink."[95] He stated simply, but forcibly, his impression of Lord Melville's fault, and then impressed upon the House the importance of its deciding on the strictest grounds of justice. "Let us bear in mind the weighty words of Claren-

[93] March 19. [94] Diary. [95] Con. Mem.

don in the case of ship money. The people of England disliked greatly the levying of the money; but they endured it until the judges had wrongfully decided in its favour. 'Here the damage and mischief cannot be expressed, that the Crown and state sustained by the deserved reproach and infamy that attended the judges, by being made use of in this and like acts of power,' &c. We it is who are now truly on our trial before the moral sense of England; and if we shrink from it, deeply shall we hereafter repent our conduct." "A stormy night," he says on reaching home. "I spoke late, and from the state of men's minds, with a good deal of effect—216 and 216, and the Speaker decided against government—adjourned at half-past five. Could not get cool in body or mind. Bed, and slept till twelve."

This speech was remarkably effective. It appealed boldly from the cry of party, to those high principles of conduct by which, after being long doubtful, he had himself been determined clearly as to the part he ought to take. "Bankes and I long doubtful what part we should take about Lord Melville, but at length clear, and Abbot, whom he consulted, clear also."[96] He seems to have carried with him the decision of the House. "The success of the motion seemed doubtful," (wrote Sir John Legard at the next election, as a reason why he could not vote for him,) "or rather, I believe, appearances indicated that it would be thrown out, when you rose, and, supported by a well-earned reputation for integrity and independence, made a

[96] Diary.

speech which at the time was said to influence forty votes. I was told by a member who was present, that Mr. Pitt could not conceal his agitation when he saw the turn your speech was taking; and I believe that the delinquency of Lord Melville, and the desertion of some of his oldest friends, inflicted a wound upon his mind which it never recovered, and contributed to his premature death." [97]

The effect of this speech upon the House was felt by all. He was "applied to on behalf of Mr. Trotter," to deprecate his censure as that of "the person whom he most feared." "Bankes," he says himself, "tells me that I am much abused by Melville's friends, especially the ladies." [98] "Sir Charles Middleton came to talk with me about Melville and Admiralty matters. He told me that I was charged with Melville's removal. That I had been so warm in the House. Others ascribed much of it to me. Lady C. heard that I had carried many with me. I feel hurt at having been thought to wound, yet I have acted rightly, and that is the only stay. Sir Charles Middleton told me that Lord Melville had advised Pitt to recommend him to the King, for first Lord of the Admiralty. He would be most likely to carry forward Lord Melville's plans, which are in fact Sir Charles's, for the naval force of the kingdom. It is to Lord Melville's honour." [99]

The House adjourned for one day after this debate,

[97] He has docketted this letter, "Sir J. Legard—very frank—blaming my conduct about Lord Melville. It did not injure Pitt's health."

[98] Diary, April 18. [99] Ib. April 12.

and resumed the subject on the 10th. "Rafflement whether Whitbread's Bill pressed for removing Melville from presence and counsels for ever, though Pitt had begun by stating that he had resigned. Opposition only determined for it this morning, but now argued as if clearly understood since Monday. Bankes and I deprecated division on it, and at length it was agreed to lay the Resolutions at the foot of the throne by the whole House." [100]

At the conclusion of the week he found time for a letter to Lord Muncaster.

"London, April 13, 1805.

"My dear Muncaster,

I seem to myself to have been wanting in the discharge of a bounden duty, in not having written to you during this busy week. This whole morning was consumed by the affair of poor D., whose melancholy situation affords a striking proof of the fatal effects of imprudence, and also of the plunges into which men are too often seduced when they are travelling the down-hill road. And this naturally leads me (can there be a more natural transition?) to Lord Melville.—Is it possible to conceive a man of his known good sense acting so foolishly? Pitt feels it deeply. I never saw him so *quailed* as on Wednesday night, and part of Monday also; and this in my opinion did him honour, by proving, that though so invincibly firm when all was well within, he could not put a good face on it when his own conscience told

[100] Diary, April 10.

him he was defending a bad cause. I spoke so late that very little of what I said appeared in any of the newspapers; but from various circumstances, I spoke with more effect than has almost ever happened to me in the House of Commons. I am reproached with having materially contributed to the catastrophe. To all Pitt's and Melville's friends I say, and most truly, that whatever may be the consequences of this affair, and whether the administration may or may not be able to stand, it is perfectly clear that they could not have weathered the storm, and rode out the gale, with Melville in the vessel after the publication of the Tenth Report.

"You will agree with me as to the good consequences from such an unusual demonstration of integrity in the House of Commons. But I should like (though it would be too provoking) to ask those staunch constitutionalists, who are such zealous friends to the honour of the House of Commons, and congratulate us so warmly on the proof of our public spirit, which has lately been exhibited, whether they think the same vote against Lord Melville would have passed, if he (for he was a party to the attempt) and Pitt had succeeded in their endeavours to form the strong government they talked of with so much hope, of Foxites, and Windhamites, and Grenvillians, and Pittites, &c. for which they said, most falsely that the whole country was so clamorous? Why should I think better of Fox and Windham than of Sidmouth and Pitt? Yet the latter could vote against the Resolution, though they would not directly

defend Melville, and so doubtless they all would have done. In short, what is called a strong government, and is eulogized as such in high terms, is often, in my opinion, the most corrupt of all others; as it is able to carry through any measure, however objectionable, and support any man, however justly obnoxious.

" We have plenty of work cutting and cut out for us after Easter. The East India papers make up more than a volume, folio, of 600 pages.

" Nothing is known about the First Lord of the Admiralty. Lord Melville has recommended Sir Charles Middleton to Pitt, but I fear the latter is too much a slave to form, to appoint him. The idea however is honourable to Lord Melville, because it is with a view to economy, reforms, improvements, &c. Farewell—I am extremely pressed.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His Diary just notes the further steps of this most painful case. " April 29th. Spencer Stanhope's motion for Civil, Bankes's for Criminal, prosecution; Pitt's for a Committee of Inquiry: I took part. 30th. Debate about Committee by ballot and Lord Castlereagh's name; foolish to make it a controversy. May 2nd. Thanks to commissioners, which I amended. Opposition very civil. 4th. How foolish of Pitt not to join with opposition in making proceedings against Melville public; appointing Committee by name, not ballot. 6th. Whitbread's motion for striking Melville out of the council. When reached House

found Pitt had anticipated wisely." On the 27th the Committee presented its Report, confirming all the former charges, and stating that, concerning one sum of £10,000, no account was given by Lord Melville. He now desired to defend himself before the House of Commons; and on the 10th of June, Mr. Wilberforce proceeds, "I am doubtful how to act in Lord Melville's affair to-morrow. 11th. Duchess of Gordon sending for me to Bankes's. Lord Melville heard. I much affected at first. Excessively absurd speech. Debate till three o'clock. Whitbread able. I moved adjournment. 12th. Criminal prosecution agreed on in preference to impeachment; opposition's motion. Addington's party supported criminal prosecution. Neither Pitt nor Fox spoke. Melville's declaration, that never had nor would tell any man how the £10,000 or £20,000 went, did him great injury. 25th. The House sat late on changing the criminal proceedings against Melville to impeachment, which carried. A very unwise proceeding, rendering even an acquittal by impeachment scarcely an acquittal."[101]

Throughout all these discussions he maintained the same tone. He was discharging a most painful duty, for Lord Melville had been for years his intimate acquaintance. But he had no choice. "You will concur with me," he wrote to Mr. Hey,[102] "as to the necessity of marking strongly our sense of such an instance of misconduct. The rather because in truth it is not religion, but popular opinion, which among us at this day is the general standard of practice.

[101] Diary. [102] May 8.

This consideration, though I kept it back, had great weight with me; for if any one, after acting as Lord Melville did, had been screened by his party from punishment, and had been well received in the world, (and a man's own party is the world to him,) there is no saying what might have been the effect in a few years on the purity of our political system."

But once in these proceedings he yielded to the impulse of his feelings; he would not join the deputation which carried up the Resolutions to St James's. To a friend who pressed upon him somewhat rudely this last sacrifice, he answered, "I am a little surprised that it should be imputed as a fault to any that they did not accompany the procession to St. James's. I should have thought that men's own feelings might have suggested to them that it was a case in which the heart might be permitted to give a lesson to the judgment. My country might justly demand that, in my decision on Lord Melville's conduct, I should be governed by the rules of justice, and the principles of the constitution, without suffering party considerations, personal friendship, or any extrinsic motive whatever, to interfere; that in all that was substantial I should deem myself as in the exercise of a judicial office. But when the sentence of the law is past, is not that sufficient? Am I to join in the execution of it? Is it to be expected of me that I am to stifle the natural feelings of the heart, and not even to shed a tear over the very sentence I am pronouncing? I know not what Spartan virtue or Stoical pride might require, but I know

that I am taught a different, aye, and a better lesson by a greater than either Lycurgus or Zeno. Christianity enforces no such sacrifice. She requires us indeed to do justice, but to love mercy. I learn not in her school to triumph even over a conquered enemy; and must I join the triumph over a fallen friend?"

His friendly feelings for Lord Melville had been always strangely blended with disapprobation of his principles, which had greatly injured, as he thought, the purer character of Mr. Pitt. "His connexion with Dundas was Pitt's great misfortune. Dundas was a loose man, and had been rather a disciple of the Edinburgh school in his youth, though it was not much known. Yet he was a fine fellow in some things. People have thought him a mean, intriguing creature, but he was in many respects a fine, warm-hearted fellow. I was with him and Pitt when they looked through the Red Book, to see who was the properest person to send as Governor-General to India; and it should be mentioned to Dundas's honour, that having the disposal of the most important office in the King's gift, he did not make it a means of gaining favour with any great family, or of obliging any of his countrymen, but appointed the fittest person he could find [Sir John Shore]. Three several times have I stated this fact in the House of Commons, and never once has it been mentioned in any of the papers."

Lord Melville's conduct to himself after all these public storms, was an instance of his better nature, and was always mentioned by him with unusual pleasure. "We did not meet for a long time, and all

his connexions most violently abused me. 'About a year before he died, we met in the stone passage which leads from the Horse Guards to the Treasury. We came suddenly upon each other, just in the open part, where the light struck upon our faces. . We saw one another, and at first I thought he was passing on, but he stopped and called out, 'Ah Wilberforce, how do you do?' and gave me a hearty shake by the hand. I would have given a thousand pounds for that shake. I never saw him afterwards."

Mr. Pitt's engagement with the Lansdown-House Abolitionists was still unfulfilled. On the 7th of May Mr. Wilberforce had been "extremely occupied about the Order in Council for stopping Guiana Slave Trade—again and again—daily almost, at Lord Camden's office. Continual delays, but right to persevere." The proclamation was at last prepared, and forwarded on the evening of the 11th of May for Mr. Wilberforce's approbation. "My dear Pitt," he wrote as soon as he had read it, "I have been looking over the Order in Council, and am very sorry to say it is in a very unsatisfactory state. But as you will not like to talk of this subject till after to-morrow night, let me only beg you to stop the insertion of the Order in the Gazette, or any other publication of it, till we talk together. As it now stands, I really think we had better run the risk of losing all by trying to carry the measure in parliament. The Gazette is printed to-morrow, so no time is to be lost.

I am, my dear Pitt,

ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Monday night was given up to "Fox's motion" on "Catholic Emancipation. Grattan amazingly eloquent. Duigenan hard and rough, but forcible and much matter. Adjourned at half-past two. Tuesday. House till half-past four. Catholic Emancipation, carried against, 336 to 124. Babington and I in majority. H. Thornton, minority—very uncomfortable about it, for all wrong." The very next day he was again "busy with Stephen and Attorney-General about Order in Council,"—and soon after longed to enjoy "a charming spring day, but was forced to town to see Pitt on Guiana Order. It is so framed as to be worse than none." He worked hard to correct these errors.

"Broomfield, May 25, 1805.

"My dear Pitt,

You will not suspect me of having been inattentive or procrastinating in the case of the Order in Council; and I can truly affirm on the contrary, that it has completely occupied the best of my working hours since I saw you last. I now send a copy of it altered agreeably to your last suggestion, and with such other small alterations as are in the judgment of persons best acquainted with the subject indispensably necessary for making it at all efficient. Even with these emendations I fear great frauds will be practised; but I trust the full flow of British capital into Guiana will be at least checked.

"It seems highly desirable that the principle of the measure should be distinctly laid down in the

front of the Order; and if such of your Cabinet as are unfriendly to our cause mean honestly to join in preventing British capital from going to Guiana, they will surely least of all object to the assertion of a principle, which will render it impossible for any one to suppose that justice and mercy have had any share in dictating the measure, and thence to charge them with inconsistency in not being governed by those principles on the main question. In order to save you trouble as much as possible, I send a written statement of reasons for such alterations as are necessary, and this, if you approve of it, you will probably put into the hands of the Chancellor. Let me remind you that we are now full late, and I know not what to say, when asked whether the Order in Council for prohibiting the Guiana Slave Trade is in full force. If any question arises in which you wish to confer with me, I will wait on you at your own time and place.

I am ever, my dear Pitt,
yours very sincerely,
W. WILBERFORCE.

"Right. Hon. W. Pitt, &c. &c. &c."

Ten days afterwards he still complains, "Pitt has not yet settled it—too bad—though he authorized Bankes and me to assure the meeting at Lord Lansdown's that he would do it. Sad work! I write and call, again and again."[103] "Procrastination," he tells Lord Muncaster, "in one whom you used to call the General, has increased to such a degree as to have

[103] Diary, June 4.

become absolutely predominant. Before the Easter holidays, a meeting of the parliamentary friends of Abolition was called at Lord Henry Petty's. Fox, Grey, Bankes, and other chiefs attended; in all about twenty or twenty-one. We consulted what measure it would be best to take, and it was agreed that the most likely to succeed, was to address the King to stop the importation of slaves into the conquered settlements. I had been trying some time to persuade Pitt to do this himself; the King's prerogative being clearly sufficient. And therefore I told the meeting that I was not without hopes of succeeding in this way, at the same time acknowledging that I had entertained similar hopes, and not without good grounds, during the last war, when it was notorious these hopes had been disappointed. I saw certain significant winks and shrugs, as if I was taken in by Pitt, and was too credulous and soft, &c.; but I of course saw them as if I had seen them not. Well, Bankes and I were expressly commissioned from the meeting, to ask Pitt whether he wished to take this service on himself or not, that we might determine whether Lord Henry Petty should give notice of it, or of some other measure. We had an interview with Pitt soon after, and were directed by him to report his answer to the meeting . . which had been adjourned for five days to give time for receiving it . . that he would himself stop the Guiana Trade. Accordingly Lord Henry Petty gave notice of the measure of abolishing the Foreign Slave Trade. But as on further consideration, and consulting with Stephen, it appeared that it

might be injurious in various ways to propose this latter measure, till the former should be quite secure, it was put off from time to time, and at length till next session. Notwithstanding Pitt was thus pledged to all the opposition, as well as to Bankes and myself, and though I have been from day to day, week after week, urging him to perform his promise, the pledge is still unredeemed; and this is an affair, probably of no less than 12 or 15,000 human beings annually, and of suffering so much capital to be invested in a foreign settlement which we must relinquish at a peace. In the last war we lodged eighteen millions of property there."

This perseverance was at last rewarded. Lord Castlereagh had become Secretary of State, and "chiefly through his habits of business, though an anti-abolitionist, the cultivation of new lands in Guiana" was "at length (Sept. 13th) stopped. This is preventing the importation of a vast number of poor creatures, who would otherwise, as in the last war, have been the victims of our great capitalists."[104] Thus for the time the Trade was greatly checked. The old islands were the only markets for our own ships; whilst the colonies of Holland, France, and Spain could only be supplied under the neutral[105] colours of America.

[104] W. Wilberforce Esq. to Lord Muncaster.

[105] The "Orders in Council" were, by a curious connexion, the offspring of this Trade. Mr. Stephen aiming only at its suppression published a masterly pamphlet (War in Disguise) upon the rights of neutral powers. Fearing if he mentioned the Slave Trade, that the effect of his arguments might be diminished by a suspicion of his motives, he confined himself entirely to the general question; and from the abstract principles

He had been, as usual, overburdened with business throughout the session of parliament. "This living in Palace Yard," he complains,[106] "is destructive to my time. In the morning I rise between eight and nine (being useless if I have not had my full *dose* of sleep). I dress, hearing Terry [his reader] from half-past nine to ten. Prayers and breakfast at a quarter after ten. From thence constant callers, or breakfasters—proper people—and my house not clear commonly, and I able to get out, till near one. Then I have often to call at the public offices, and if a committee morning, I have scarce any writing time before dinner. Then after House, friends—Babington, Grant, Henry Thornton, and others drop in, so that I get scarcely any time for thinking on political topics, or preparing for debates. A residence near London would withdraw me from company, and give me more time. Yet I dread the separation which my leaving Broomfield would make from my chief friends, the Thorntons, Teignmouths, Stephens, Venn, Macaulay, with whom I now live like a brother."

This general sketch may be easily filled in from any page of his Diary taken almost at random. "March 25th. Breakfasters, Mrs. Thompson, Rowland Hill, Alderman Hutton, Dr. M'Dowell, and Mr. Martyn (Missionary). Babington, Carrington, and others called. The house did not empty till past one,

he was thus led to lay down, the celebrated "Orders" were subsequently drawn.

[106] Diary.

when I went off to lodgings, and wrote for two hours or more at Bernard's paper. Home—dinner, my sister and two nieces, Babington, and Mr. Richmond (who preached yesterday at the Lock, both times—voluble and pious, but rambling). House—Fox presented Catholics' petition. Home, and letters. 26th. Breakfast—Bishop of Exeter and others. Callers. Pitt's and Lord Camden's offices. Cowie's Committee. Dined home—Teignmouth, Henry Thornton, Macaulay, Babington, in family way. Evening, Grant, Babington, &c. talking over Tenth Report, which fills every mouth and mind. April 3rd. Grey breakfasted —callers—very poorly. Busy on Mace's affair. War office, Col. P.'s business. Home, dinner quietly— M. Montagu, Norton, the Mohawk Chief, Babington, Mrs. Stephen, &c. Much talk with Montagu about Melville's case—he very strong. May 12th. Busy writing about Suppression of Vice Society to Bishop of Durham, Lord Dartmouth, A. Parke, and others. To Gray's Inn Coffee House: Suppression of Vice Society —adjourned debate on artifice repelling artifice—spoke for nearly an hour. Shocked at the extremes to which the justifiers of artifice hurried. D. dull, and most empty of general principles. E. a lawyer, coarse, but able, their grand advocate—went great lengths. May 28th. Private meeting about use of fraud, when came to a compromise by their agreeing not to practise falsehood." Several days too were given up to the Proclamation Society, which this year closed its operations by prevailing upon Bishop Porteus to write and ex-

postulate with some "Sunday concert ladies,"[107] who were just introducing this new form of dissipation.

The session of parliament closed in the middle of July, but family circumstances detained him in the neighbourhood of London. "When you talked of intruding on my leisure," he writes to Mr. Hey, who was on a journey southward, "something between a smile and a sigh, and partaking of the nature of both, escaped me." His own impulse was to bury himself in the depths of the "real country as soon as parliament rose." "I' long for the rocks and mountains of Cumberland; the very idea refreshes me, though it excites a little of the maladie du pays. I do not know one worldly thing I should like so much as bringing my family to share in the delight with which I feed on your romantic scenery."[108] Even in the recess, moreover, his Diary shows that he could never command perfect quietness at Broomfield. "July 17th. Bernard called, and dined en famille—much talk of his plans. A fine ardent mind. Many callers to-day, so that I get little done. 22nd. Home to dinner, where, by accident, a strange assemblage—Venn, Pearson, Farish, Waugh, and Brougham: all silenced by each other. Pity!" "How true it is, when we see the interior of things in this world, we always see mementoes of human weakness and corruption. R. told me his uncle was peevish and impracticable; forgot himself. Age, infirmities,

[107] Diary, April 6. Vid. the Bishop's letter in Hodgson's Life of Porteus.

[108] To Lord Muncaster.

hard task at times, &c. Alas! alas! earth is but earth, and its inhabitants earthly. O heaven, heaven, thou seat of perfect love and holiness, where all infirmities will be done away!" [109]

His feelings in general society took far more than formerly this tone. "I was received at E. very affectionately, and was in hopes of getting some serious talk with them, but entirely failed; though I really kept it in mind, yet, when actually with them, it strangely slipped away from me. I wished especially to talk with Lord N. He not so attentive as one could wish to her, his baby, &c.—very conceited, or rather affected. This sort of society is very distressing to me, especially with those I love, and wish to benefit." [110]

His feelings were again tried by "three of his warmest supporters in Yorkshire, who all solicited" of him "a living for M. I am forced to decline asking. I fear they will be affronted, yet God is able to turn the hearts of men as the rivers of water." [111]

This was no unusual trial of his firmness. "I am much hurt by solicitations from my friend N. for a living. It *hurts* me greatly to appear ungrateful to one who has been so kind to me, and it may materially affect my interest also. But I must adhere to my principles, and trust the event to God. If I lose my seat really on this account, can I be removed more honourably? It would be a minor martyrdom."

His letters during this autumn bear marks of his nearness to the fountain-head of political intelligence. He not unfrequently "drove into town to see Pitt,"

[109] Diary, July 21. [110] Diary, Aug. 1. [111] Ib. July 26

and "had much talk with him upon political topics, finding him very open and kind."[112]

TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

"Near London, Sept. 9, 1805.

"My dear Friend,

Having my pen in hand, I must chat with you for a few minutes, though they must be but few. I quite rejoiced in your having the Bishop of London under your roof: I can picture to myself his innocent playfulness and affectionate vivacity, and how very happy he would be with you, and you all with him. I wonder you could keep it all to yourself, for it is really true, that when I heard he was to be with you, I was very near scribbling to you on the moment, to wish you joy of an event which would give you so much fair pleasure. How truly amiable he is!

"I have no comfort in public affairs, except that our friend Lord Barham is at the helm; for though never man came to it in such trying times, (this is especially true in his department,) yet I cannot but hope that we shall see an illustration of 'Him that honoureth Me I will honour.'

"With the experience of the last war fresh in my recollection, how can I participate in those visions of glory, in which I fear a friend[113] of mine is even still ready to indulge, though I am afraid they will never receive a local habitation and a name. Well—the Lord reigneth. We are more and more driven for comfort to that bottom, and it is sound anchoring ground which will never fail us.

[112] Diary. [113] Mr. Pitt.

"Have you received any more intimations from high places, about the disposition to act up to your hints? I greatly rejoice in your having written that book, on every ground, both public and personal.

"Poor Lady Waldegrave has been with us, and on the whole as well as one could expect, though sadly weather-beaten. Oh what a change will the next world make to her! Her voyage has been tempestuous, but I doubt not she will reach the desired haven. And 'Oh the thought that thou art safe!' Yes, my dear friend, there is nothing else worth living for. May we more and more feel this great truth, and live accordingly."

His want of confidence in the national counsels did not arise merely from his "recollection of the last war." His spirits were lowered by the consideration of the national sins. He reflected that there had been few, if any, symptoms of general amendment. "The parliamentary recognition of Sunday drilling has added, I must say, to the apprehensions which the Slave Trade, and the contemptuous treatment of Christianity in our colonial possessions, from first to last, have so long infused. I have been of late making strong representations to Lord Castlereagh, on the dreadful state of morals in New South Wales. I have been assured on good authority, that of near two thousand children now in the colony, there are not one hundred who receive any education at all."[114]

One quarter, however, offered a less gloomy, though not less affecting prospect; and he did but

[114] Letter to William Hey Esq. Nov. 1.

share the feelings of the nation, at the news of Nelson's victory and death, when he was "so overcome that he could not go on reading for tears."[115] There was too little of this chastened spirit in the official announcement of the great victory of Trafalgar. This was Lord Muncaster's remark upon their tone. "There would methinks have been something noble, dignified, and most uncommonly interesting in the great minister of the empire gratefully acknowledging as it were before the whole people, the Divine blessing given to the arms of the country. What *quizzism* could he have been afraid of, adopting the language of the hero victors? Lord Burleigh had not this fear when he made his reply to Walsingham. Lest you should not recollect it, I will briefly state it to you. Sir Francis Walsingham had been waiting to confer with him on some business or other, and at length Lord Burleigh coming in from prayers, Sir Francis jocularly (which in the cant of the present day would be styled quizzingly,) said to him, 'that he wished himself so good a servant of God as Lord Burleigh, but that he had not been at church for a week past.' To which Lord Burleigh thus gravely replied: 'I hold it meet for us to ask God's grace to keep *us* sound of heart, who have so much in our power; and to direct us to our well-doing for all the people, whom it is easy for us to injure and ruin; and herein, my good friend, the special blessing seemeth meet to be discreetly asked and wisely worn.' This single trait

[115] Diary.

of Lord Burleigh's character, standing upon most excellent authority, has always lifted him more in my estimation, than all his wise policies and councils. I should have been truly delighted and gratified, to have had the public proof I have alluded to, that somewhat the same train of ideas governed the great minister of our day. Lord Collingwood appears to be a worthy successor of Nelson."

Mr. Wilberforce heartily assented to these views.

"Yoxall Lodge, Nov. 25, 1805.

"My dear Muncaster,

Had I been in town you may be pretty sure you would have heard from me of the signal victories with which the Almighty had vouchsafed to bless our naval arms. I well know how your heart would expand on the intelligence. Would to God, my dear Muncaster, (I say it seriously and from the heart, not with levity, and therefore vainly,) that the nation in general, and especially that our great men and rulers, felt as you seem to have done on the occasion; that they had looked like you beyond second causes, and had seen the kind hand of the Almighty Disposer of all things, in the many, many deliverances our highly favoured nation has experienced.

"I knew that the coincidence of Buonaparte's declaration about ships, colonies, and commerce, with the deprivation he sustained of them, would not escape you. I was delighted with Collingwood's general orders for a day of humiliation and thanksgiving.

The latter I had heard of in the case of Lord Duncan's victory and some others, but I do not remember to have ever heard of the mention of imploring pardon for sins, as well as returning thanks for blessings. The former pleased me particularly, for nothing can more magnify goodness than its being unmerited, and that, on the contrary, punishment has been rather deserved. But, my dear Muncaster, how abominable it is, that though, as we have recently learned, Lord Nelson and several others have ordered general thanksgivings on shipboard after victories, yet that these orders have never till now appeared in the Gazette; and consequently they have not been known, and have not produced their proper effect on the public mind. And this opens a large chapter of our government's misconduct. I mean that of our foolishly (for it deserves no better name) despising fanfaronade and gasconade so much, and being so much afraid of becoming liable to the dreaded shafts of quizzers, as to neglect effect altogether, and the importance of carrying along with you the body of your people; and for that end, taking all proper occasions of warning and animating them; and again, of endeavouring to conciliate the good-will and deprecate the envy of foreign nations. It is really provoking in the highest degree to hear that, on the continent, some of those very countries which have suffered the most from French domination, have yet wished success to the arms of France in consequence of the supposed hauteur of our court and all its ministers and agents. I heard some remarkable instances of this from a very intelligent

man,[116] who last year travelled through Italy and Germany.[117]

I am, my dear Muncaster,
ever affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

He was on a visit to Mr. Babington when he heard "the sad news of the armistice after the entire defeat of the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz. God can preserve us—apparently we shall be in the most imminent danger." But the full evil of this blow he did not learn until after his return to town. "Jan. 21st. To London on parliament's meeting. Heard sad account of Pitt, and opposition put off intended amendment." Austerlitz had struck a fatal blow at the health of this high-minded man, and a tie was about to be severed to which Mr. Wilberforce had owed much of the influence, and many of the difficulties, of his earlier years. "22nd. Quite unsettled and uneasy about Pitt, so to town. Heard bad account. Called on various friends, and on Rose, who quite overcome. He had been long at Putney talking to Bishop of Lincoln. Physicians said all was hopeless. Rose suggested to me about paying Pitt's debts, and even that I should make the motion. I thought, but I own on reflection, my judgment decidedly against it. Consulted Bankes. He likewise contra. 23rd. Heard from Bishop of Lincoln that Pitt had died

[116] Mr. (now Lord) Brougham.

[117] See the sentiments of the Germans in Schiller's Antritt des neuen Jahrhundderts.

about half-past four in the morning. Deeply rather than pathetically affected by it. Pitt killed by the enemy as much as Nelson. Babington went to dine at Lord Teignmouth's, but I had no mind to go out."[118]

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

"Broomfield, Jan. 25, 1806.

"My dear Muncaster,

I almost feel criminal in not having written to you, for the chance at least of your getting my letter; but really I knew not what to say; I could have told you no more than you would have learned from the newspapers; and the reflections which the melancholy event called forth in my mind, were rather such as were fitter for verbal communication, than to be put on paper and trusted to the post.

"There is something peculiarly affecting in the time and circumstances of poor Pitt's death. I own I have a thousand times (aye, times without number) wished and hoped that a quiet interval would be afforded him, perhaps in the evening of life, in which he and I might confer freely on the most important of all subjects. But the scene is closed—for ever.

"Of course what I am about to say is in strict confidence. I have heard, not without surprise, that his debts are considerable, a sum was named as large as £40 or 50,000. This must have been roguery,[119] for he

[118] Diary.

[119] In the year 1786, Mr. Pitt had requested Mr. Robert Smith to examine his private affairs, which even then were somewhat embarrassed. A

really has not for many years lived at a rate of more than £5 or 6000 per annum. I do not say this lightly; and he has had an income since he got the Cinque Ports of £10,000 per annum. Now an idea was proposed of the nation's paying them; but I own, considering the time and circumstances in which he died, and the situation of the country, the burdens which must be laid on, and the sacrifices which must be borne, I should fear that.. however, through the mutual connivance of parties, (Grenville related to Pitt, Fox, Windham, &c. connected with Grenville,) it might be carried in the House of Commons . . it might be grudgingly paid by the people at large, and create a feeling very injurious to his memory. Then it would be truly said, the precedent might be a very dangerous one, and might lead to sad party practices.

"But again—To whom are the debts due? If to tradesmen, they ought to be paid, but might not debts to other sort of people, rich connexions, &c. be suspected; and the very idea of the people's paying these is monstrous. I must say, however, that considering the number of affluent men[120] connected with Pitt, some of whom have got great and lucrative places from him, I cannot doubt but that, with perfect privacy and delicacy, a subscription might be made, adequate to the purpose.

* * * * * *

This late event saddens rather than softens my heart.

letter from Mr. Smith to Mr. Wilberforce fully bears out the opinion expressed in the text.

[120] A list of sixty-three persons, who might be expected to contribute, appears among Mr. Wilberforce's papers.

There is something weighing down to the spirits. I am not in a humour to bear the babble of the day, so I keep quiet here, and therefore know nothing about parties. Farewell.

Ever truly yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His own true generosity of mind naturally made him sanguine as to the success of such an attempt, and on the afternoon of the same day he wrote

TO THE RIGHT HON. GEORGE ROSE.

"A thousand thanks, my dear Rose, for your letter. I will consider how I can best promote the private plan, of the success of which I have no doubt. I am only anxious measures should be taken with delicacy. I am extremely pressed, having just this moment got a pile of letters.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"Saturday, Jan. 25, half-past three o'clock.

"I have this instant seen the papers, and will certainly attend;[121] but I must say it would have been better in my colleague to consult and combine more about it. If so, perhaps all opposition might have been prevented. But Lascelles acts from a warm and honest heart as ever man had.

"You should have told me how you yourself are."

During the next week he was unceasingly em-

[121] Mr. Lascelles' motion for a public funeral for Mr. Pitt.

ployed "to get people to agree to a subscription to pay Pitt's debts. Tried many, but cold in general, except Attorney-General, [Perceval,] who warm and generous as always."[122] The matter required immediate despatch. "That warmth of sentiment," said Mr. Perceval, "which opens and softens the heart, certainly has a tendency to remove all strictures, even those of the purse; but the frame has a tendency to return to its habitual contraction."[123]

On the following day, therefore, he was again "driving about, trying about the debts. Lord Cornwallis's death heard of. Dined at Sam Thornton's, who agreed to try in the city once more." A large sum had been offered Mr. Pitt, chiefly by the city merchants; but he had at once refused their aid, lest the consciousness of such an obligation should intrude upon him when transacting public business with them. On the Friday he was for a third time "trying about the debts, but in vain," and heard "a bad report from the city." And on Monday his plan was finally defeated by the motion about the debts in the House of Commons. "I came out of the House after speaking on thanks to Lord Cornwallis."[124] The sum of £40,000 therefore, which was due to tradesmen, was discharged by the nation. Mr. Pitt's private friends had raised £12,000 in the autumn of 1801,[125] to relieve him from embarrassment; and one amongst them who owed the most to the

[122] Diary, Jan. 28. [123] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Jan. 29.
[124] Diary, Feb. 3.
[125] This debt stood in the names of six persons, but had been advanced by various parties in sums of £1000 or £500 each.

friendship of the minister, was anxious that these claims should be added to the public grant. This degrading proposition was happily defeated; but not till Mr. Wilberforce had solemnly declared, that if the matter were proposed in parliament, he would (being one of the creditors) give it his most earnest and persevering opposition. It is pleasing to turn from this conduct to that of Mr. Perceval, who, with a large family and moderate fortune, at once offered £1000 to the proposed subscription.

And now nothing remained but to attend the relics of the dead to the last earthly abode of talent and greatness. When the motion for a public funeral was made in parliament, he bore testimony to the inflexible integrity and the pure love of his country which had actuated his departed friend. In answer to those who, because Mr. Pitt's continental policy had been unsuccessful, would have withheld from him the last tribute of his country's respect, he showed the strong claim of his domestic administration to the gratitude of the nation. This is not the place for his matured estimate of his friend's character,[126] but his letters written at the moment afford a lively picture of his first impressions. "Mr. Pitt had foibles, and of course they were not diminished by so long a continuance in office; but for a clear and comprehensive view of the most complicated subject in all its relations; for that fairness of mind which disposes a man to follow out, and when overtaken to recognise the truth; for magnanimity, which made him

[126] This may hereafter appear in a separate form.

ready to change his measures when he thought the good of the country required it, though he knew he should be charged with inconsistency on account of the change; for willingness to give a fair hearing to all that could be urged against his own opinions, and to listen to the suggestions of men, whose understandings he knew to be inferior to his own; for personal purity, disinterestedness, integrity, and love of his country, I have never known his equal."[127] "His strictness in regard to truth was astonishing, considering the situation he had so long filled."

TO LADY WALDEGRAVE.

"Broomfield, Feb. 1, 1806.

"My dear Lady W.

I was just about to take up the pen two days ago, when the account reached me of the melancholy event,[128] which will naturally call forth still more painful feelings and more tender sensibilities in your mind. It is indeed very awful, and is sufficient to strike with seriousness the most inconsiderate hearts, that just at this moment, when our old national fabric is assailed so powerfully from without, the Almighty seems to be taking from us our main props within; whatever was most eminent for talents and public spirit and heroism—Nelson, Pitt, and Cornwallis, all gone together. Yet the same events have very different aspects. It is possible, (reasoning from the contents of the Holy Scriptures, whence alone we can derive our scanty knowledge of the Divine princi-

[127] To W. Hey Esq. Feb. 12. [128] The death of Lord Cornwallis.

ples of conduct,) it is possible, and I would hope, but I own with more than a counterbalancing of a contrary fear, that the Almighty may intend to show us our folly in trusting to an arm of flesh, and that He can deliver and protect us, when they are no more, in whom our ungrateful and irreligious nation has been used to repose its chief confidence.

"How do these events tend to illustrate the vanity of worldly greatness! Poor Pitt, I almost believe died of—a broken heart! for it is only due to him to declare that the love of his country burned in him with as ardent a flame as ever warmed the human bosom, and the accounts from the armies struck a death's blow within. A broken heart! What! was he like Otway, or Collins, or Chatterton, who had not so much as a needful complement of food to sustain their bodies, while the consciousness of unrewarded talents, of mortified pride, pressed on them within, and ate out their very souls? Was he even like Suwaroff, another most useful example, basely deserted and driven into exile by the sovereign he had so long served? No, he was in the station, the highest in power and estimation in the whole kingdom—the favourite, I believe on the whole, both of King and people. Yes, this man who died of a broken heart was First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The time and circumstances of his death were peculiarly affecting, and I really believe, however incredulous you may be, that it dwelt on the minds of people in London for—shall I say, as I was going to say, a whole week?—I really never remember any event producing so much appa-

rent feeling. But London soon returned to its gaiety and giddiness, and all the world has been for many days busied about the inheritance, before the late possessor is laid in his grave. Poor fellow! It is an inexpressible satisfaction to me to be able to reflect, that I never gave him reason for a moment to believe that I had any object whatever of a worldly kind in view, in continuing my friendly connexion.

"I have been interrupted, and must very unwillingly hasten to a conclusion. I had hoped to fill another sheet, and without unmeaning apologies for prolixity. Let me however add a few sentences. As to poor Pitt's death, I fear the account in the newspapers is not correct. But I have not been able to learn many particulars. Indeed he spoke very little for some days before he died, and was extremely weakened and reduced on the Wednesday morning, when he was first talked to as a dying man. He expired early on Thursday morning.

"Your Ladyship will conceive how this event has saddened my heart. Of Lord Cornwallis's death, I have not heard many particulars, and you will doubtless be fully and minutely informed. But I have learned from good authority, that the anxiety for the public good, and the earnestness in discharging the duties of his station, to the forgetfulness of self, continued entire; and there were some remarkable proofs of it, to the very last.

"I have been labouring with great diligence, but unsuccessfully, to get poor Pitt's debts (amounting in the whole to near £50,000) paid by the private con-

tributions of his friends, connexions, and admirers, rather than by the nation. I grieve lest the payment by a vote of parliament should be made a precedent, though most unfairly, for the payment of other debts; and lest, considering the heavy burthens lying and still to be laid on the country, there should by and by remain in the mind of the bulk of the community an unpleasant feeling, which may have an effect on his memory, and associate with it an impression of a very undesirable kind. There are many who now join in the general cry, who will not hereafter be very tender of his credit.

"You are near the Mores, if you see them give my kind remembrances, and do me the favour to say I would write, but that I am up to the chin in business. May God bless and support your heart, my dear Lady W. and cheer you under every trial; giving you in proportion to your temporal trials, a more than compensating taste of that peace which passeth all understanding, and that 'joy with which a stranger intermeddles not,' the peace and joy in believing through the power of the Holy Ghost. O blessed words, 'The rest that remaineth for the people of God.'

"I hope Lord W. and all your Ladyship's family are well; always let me know of your and your family's going on, for a deep interest will always be taken in your happiness by,

my dear Lady W.
your Ladyship's faithful friend and servant,
W. WILBERFORCE.

"I have not time to read over my scrawl."

At the funeral, February 22nd, he was one of those who bore the banner which preceded the coffin. "Attended Pitt's funeral—an affecting ceremony. What thoughts occurred to me when I saw the coffin letting down, and just before! I thought of our appearance before God in heaven. May the impression be durable."[129] It could not be without the deepest emotions that he beheld the earth close over one, who for five and twenty years had been the foremost man of his country. His sun had set untimely, his dearest hopes had withered before him, and his power had passed to unfriendly successors. And as though in mockery of greatness, the adjoining statue of the first William Pitt seemed, said Mr. Wilberforce, to be looking down with consternation into the grave which was opened for his favourite son, the last perpetuator of the name, which he had ennobled.[130] "Oh what cause do I find for humiliation and gratitude," he observes, "looking back to my own and Pitt's public life!"[131] And how many fresh reasons had he for thankfulness at being led in a path where political disappointments had no power to wound him, before he was brought back to the same spot, after a second quarter of a century, to mingle his dust with that of his illustrious friend!

[129] Journal. [130] Con. Mem. [131] Diary.

CHAPTER XX.

FEBRUARY 1806 TO MARCH 1807.

Wilberforce's conduct towards new ministry—Lord Chief Justice in the Cabinet—Cause of Abolition continues to advance—Foreign Slave Bill—Slave Trade condemned by both Houses—Iron Tax—Woollen Committee—Report—Preparation for bringing forward the Abolition next year—Death of Fox—Dissolution of parliament—Canvass for Yorkshire—Wilberforce's great popularity—Returned without a contest—Publishes his book upon the Slave Trade—Parliament meets—Abolition Bill passes the Lords, and read for the first time in Commons—He opposes ministers on the grant of Maynooth College—Critical state of Abolition Bill—It passes into a law—Congratulations—His own feelings.

THE death of Mr. Pitt dissolved the existing government, and the inheritance of his power was divided amongst the followers of Mr. Fox, Lord Grenville, Mr. Windham, and Lord Sidmouth. It was Mr. Wilberforce's general practice to support the King's government whenever he was able; and on this ground he now disclaimed at once all intentions of systematic opposition. He wished too, as far as possible, to conciliate their support in the approaching Abolition struggle; and greatly to the annoyance of many of his friends supported Lord Henry Petty in the

contest for the representation of the University of Cambridge, which followed the death of Mr. Pitt..

"My suddenly promising Lord Henry Petty, (which done too hastily, partly from not thinking I had any interest, partly from being found in a state of wishing to show Lord Henry how much both I and the cause felt indebted to him,) has produced a sad degree of rufflement. Dear Dean[1] much hurt about it for my sake. I am accused of changing sides, and voting for a man, who was going to make a motion which might have terminated in the impeachment of Pitt. Then all sorts of calumnies against Lord Henry Petty—educated by Priestley, &c. I received letters from Dean, volumes; Simeon, cum multis aliis. Fox, I hear, has had an explanation with the King, assuring him that not only friendly to the House of Hanover, and him, though not to late ministry; but also that he would not bring on measures offensive to him—Catholic question, &c. I have been very anxious about Lord Ellenborough. Fox, &c.'s doing. Lord Sidmouth would have had Lord Buckinghamshire; but the opposition said they had friends of equal or superior pretensions, who in that case must be brought forward."[2]

Yet even to purchase support upon this question, he could not sacrifice his own independence. "Our great cause," he tells Mr. Gisborne,[3] "has been considerably accredited by what has passed at the Cambridge election. Lord Henry Petty got a great deal of support, owing to his known zeal in it. His opponent

[1] Milner. [2] Diary, Feb. 13. [3] Feb. 11.

Lord Palmerstone lost much owing to his being supposed, mistakenly I believe, to be our enemy; and numbers declared they would not, though satisfied in all other points, vote for an anti-abolitionist. So far well. The Chancellor of the Exchequer comes from Cambridge in a good state of mind quoad hoc. Fox a decided friend. Grenville ditto. Lord Spencer I believe favourable, but not very strong. Lord Moira I doubt; Sidmouth, Ellenborough. Erskine talking friendly to me, but always absenting himself. Lord Fitzwilliam I am not quite sure, but I think favourable. Windham contra. But the great point would be to get if possible the royal family to give up their opposition. Stephen had a plan suggested by his warm zeal, that we should send a deputation to the new ministry, to make a sort of contract that we would befriend them as we did Pitt, i. e. give them the turn of the scale, &c. if they would promise us to support the Abolition as a government measure. The idea is inadmissible, both on grounds of rectitude and policy, (the two parties would infallibly have different ideas of the practical extent of the obligation, and mutual misunderstanding would ensue,) yet I think we ought to contrive that the effect intended by it may be produced; and though I dare scarcely be sanguine when I recollect with whom we have to do, yet I cannot but entertain some hopes that the wish to mollify, and even conciliate, a number of strange impracticable and otherwise *uncomeatable* fellows by gratifying them in this particular, may have its weight; at least it will tend to counteract the fear of offending the West Indians."

Upon these independent principles he acted from the first, and was compelled to oppose one of the first measures of administration. "I feel strongly," he tells Mr. Babington, "the mischievous effects of making the Chief Justice of England a politician, by giving him for the first time a seat in the Cabinet." "So far as regards Lord Ellenborough himself, I should welcome the introduction into the motley Cabinet which has been now formed, of his love of good order, his vigorous understanding, his undaunted firmness, and so far as I know them, I am disposed to add, his sound constitutional principles. But really, whether the mischievous consequences of subjecting the decisions of our courts of justice to the influence of party attachments be considered, or (what may perhaps be of full as much importance) the producing in the public mind a general persuasion that this bias exists, it seems to me the most injurious blow our constitution has sustained since the revolution."[4] "So strongly do I feel it, that if no one else does it, I know not how I can forbear bringing the subject before parliament." These objections he openly declared in the debate upon the subject on the 3rd of March, without causing any separation between the Lord Chief Justice and himself. Their friendly intercourse had been maintained since their meeting on the continent in the summer of 1785; and he now "wrote to Lord Ellenborough on the evils of his having a Cabinet office, thinking it most manly and fair to state objections to himself."[5] He "returned a very handsome answer;" and when quitting office thirteen

[4] Letter to Henry Bankes Esq. [5] Diary, Feb. 4.

months later, he again alluded in a friendly manner to Mr. Wilberforce's opposition; "Well Wilberforce, I hope I have not done much mischief after all."

The leading members too of the new government understood his principles; and to his great joy entered heartily into his Abolition views. On this subject he had many interviews with Fox, whom he describes as "quite rampant and playful, as he was twenty-two years ago, when not under any awe of his opponents. Consulting about Abolition. Fox and Lord Henry Petty talked as if we might certainly carry our question in the House of Commons, but should certainly lose it in the House of Lords. This looks but ill, as if they wished to please us, and yet not forfeit Prince of Wales's favour, and that of G. R.[6] and other anti-abolitionists."[7] Notwithstanding these expressions, he never questioned the sincerity of Mr. Fox's attachment to his cause; and he learned afterwards with pleasure, that "the Prince had given his honour to Fox, not to stir adversely."[8] The prospect was now brightening. "Our Slave business rather mends. William Smith saw Lord Moira, who will confer with the Prince of Wales."[9] After many conferences, in the following week, "with Lord Grenville, Lord Sidmouth, Fox, Lord Henry Petty, Stephen,"[10] he determined that a Bill for the prohibition of the Foreign Slave Trade (which would fix the advantages gained in the last year) should precede

[6] The King.
[7] Diary, March 5.
[8] W. Smith Esq. to W. Wilberforce Esq. Nov. 17.
[9] Diary, March 13.
[10] Diary.

his general measure. This naturally followed Mr. Pitt's Order in Council; and would have been moved by Lord Henry Petty in the former session, but for the dangerous illness of Lord Lansdown. It was judged right to intrust this measure in the Commons to one of the law officers of the Crown; and Lord Grenville agreed to introduce it in the Lords, assuring Mr. Wilberforce that he should be "happy to promote the object in any way."[11] The subject was immediately entered upon. "The Attorney-General Pigott" proceeded at once "to give notice of Foreign Slave Bill, about which had taken pains. Gives notice quite wrong, and we all sadly discomposed."[12] "Wrote to Fox," who "said that the Order Book should be altered to make it right."[13] The measure now proceeded, though "the agent for Jamaica conceived himself bound by his instructions to oppose it."[14] "How wonderful," says Mr. Wilberforce, "are the ways of Providence! The Foreign Slave Bill is going quietly on. How God can turn the hearts of men! Lords Grenville and Henry Petty wish my general Abolition Bill not to come on, till the Attorney-General's Bill carried through. I believe they are right, and at all events must give way to their wish. Perceval sentit idem."[15] While this Bill was passing though the Commons, a similar one was introduced into the House of Lords, where it was carried triumphantly on the 10th of May.

[11] Lord Grenville to W. Wilberforce Esq. March 25.
[12] Diary, March 27. [13] Ib. March 28.
[14] Attorney-General to W. Wilberforce Esq. April, 1806.
[15] Diary, April 5.

"I saw our strength," says Lord Grenville, "and thought the occasion was favourable for launching out a little beyond what the measure itself actually required. I really think a foundation is laid for doing more and sooner than I have for a long time allowed myself to hope." [16] Mr. Wilberforce rejoiced in this success. "Sunday, 18th. We have carried the Foreign Slave Bill, and we are now deliberating whether we shall push the main question. O Lord, do Thou guide us right, and enable me to maintain a spiritual mind amid all my hurry of worldly business, having my conversation in heaven." [17]

He had intended to follow up this measure by the general Bill, but after "meeting Fox at Lord Grenville's, and holding some anxious consultations with them, and also with" his "own friends about the expediency of proposing the general question this year; when it was almost decided to try," [18] he "most reluctantly gave up the idea on Lord Grenville's sure opinion, that no chance this session in the House of Lords; the bishops going out of town, &c. But we are to have a general resolution for Abolition both in Commons and Lords. How wonderful are the ways of God, and how are we taught to trust not in man but in Him! Though intimate with Pitt for all my life since earliest manhood, and he most warm for Abolition, and really honest; yet now my whole human dependence is placed on Fox, to whom this life opposed, and on Grenville, to whom always rather

[16] To W. Wilberforce Esq. May 17.
[17] Journal, Sunday, May 18. [18] Ib. May 25.

hostile till of late years, when I heard he was more religious.[19] O Lord, Thou hast all hearts in Thy disposal: oh that it may be Thy will to put an end to this abhorred system."

In the present feelings of the country more could be done for Abolition by Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, than Mr. Pitt was ever able to attempt; yet they could not make it a ministerial question, or even secure the concurrence of the whole Cabinet. Two of its chief members were its persevering enemies. The majority however determined to support the resolutions which were to bind the House to a speedy adoption of the general measure. "A Cabinet council," writes Lord Grenville, "is fixed for to-morrow, the result of which will I trust be such a notice in the House of Commons as we talked of;" and on the 4th Mr. Wilberforce summoned Mr. Stephen to a private "consult about the resolution which Mr. Fox is to move, that after having made up our own minds, we may make our report to him." The debate came on upon the 10th, when he moved an address, calling on the King to use his influence to obtain the co-operation of foreign powers; "a measure which it obviously would not be so proper for any of the King's ministers to bring forward."[20]

The resolutions, which were proposed by the leading ministers, declared the Slave Trade to be "contrary to

[19] Vid. p. 179. "You don't like Grenville," Pitt had said to him formerly, "and Grenville knows that you don't."

[20] William Wilberforce Esq. to H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester, June 9.

the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy;" and that the House would "with all practicable expediency" proceed to abolish it. "We carried our resolutions 100 and odd to 14, and my address without a division. If it please God to spare the health of Fox, and to keep him and Grenville together, I hope we shall next year see the termination of all our labours."[21] But gratifying as it was to know that the days of this execrable Trade were numbered, one evil was likely to follow the announcement. This had not escaped him. Before the end of May he had consulted Mr. Stephen on the need of "some expedient for preventing the sudden increase of the Slave Trade, from the passing of a denunciating resolution against it."[22] And he soon afterwards suggested to Mr. Fox the necessity of a temporary enactment for "preventing" such an "influx." "With Fox for an hour and a half. He very rational and unaffected."[23] Before the session closed, a Bill was passed rapidly through both Houses to prevent the employment in the Trade of any fresh ships.

During all this time county business had pressed hard upon him. Some of the taxes proposed by the new government were most injurious to his mercantile constituents. "Budget. Lord Henry Petty's first exhibition. Very well, but not quite first-rate."[24] "Lord Henry Petty gave up the private brewing tax. Fox on his coming in said, 'I'd rather get my bread any

[21] Diary, April 10.
[22] W. Wilberforce Esq. to James Stephen Esq. May 27.
[23] Diary, June 7. [24] Ib. March 25

way than by being Chancellor of the Exchequer.'"[25] A projected tax on unwrought iron, was that which the manufacturers of Yorkshire most condemned. This he was a principal instrument in defeating. "It pleased God," he says,[26] "that I got a good deal of credit in the iron business, having made myself master of it." This attention to commercial matters, and still more his conduct in the woollen trade inquiry, were highly valued in his county, and produced no small effect in the elections which so unexpectedly followed. The woollen trade inquiry involved "a very fatiguing parliamentary attendance." The committee "had sat above five weeks," upon the 25th of May, and "continued till within a few days of the rising of parliament."[27] During all which time he "never but one day was prevented from attending it."[28] The inquiry had been called for by the workmen and domestic clothiers, who wished to subject this important manufacture to the most arbitrary restrictions—the workmen being desirous of reviving an obsolete law against machinery, and the domestic manufacturers of preventing the production of cloth on the large scale in factories. Great part of the trade of Yorkshire was at this time in the hands of men of small capital, who, with the aid of their own families, prepared their goods at home, and sold them in the adjoining cloth halls.

Between this valuable race of men and the enterprising capitalist he had now to mediate. For when,

[25] Diary, June 8.
[26] Ib. May 25.
[27] Diary.
[28] To Mr. Hey, Aug. 1.

after a long examination of witnesses, the Committee met to agree on their Report, "after wasting two or three mornings about it, reading it round a table—a sad way; they gave the preparation of it up to" him, "in a very confiding, but really very friendly manner." He "returned to Broomfield in the evening," intending at once to set about his task; but the following week was crowded with engagements. Tuesday was "the House of Lords, debate on Fox's Slave Trade Resolution. Most gratifying, Ellenborough especially; and Lord Erskine—though theatrical. Carried it, 42 to 21. Lord Sidmouth as usual."[29] Wednesday morning he was attending a committee, and not home till late in the evening. On Thursday and Friday he was "in town all day, and both nights at the House on Windham's Training Bill. Sunday drilling discussed."[30] This evil custom he successfully resisted. "The shocking effects of it" he "had heard not only from the clergy, but from all who were decent and moral;" and when the Bill for a levy en masse was brought forward, he at once "called about it on Windham, whom" he found "very obstinate." "Lord Grenville telling me, frankly, that he agreed with me; and that he had told Windham that if the bishops should propose the alteration in the House of Lords, he could not oppose it. More talk with Windham about Sunday drilling. He had given up so far as to make Sunday drilling depend on King's ordering it, but had struck out 'necessary,' or any thing to guide ministers' discretion. When I

[29] Diary, Tuesday, June 24. [30] Ib. Saturday, June 28.

feared all was over, he went out and accepted the words 'shall deem necessary.'"[31] On this success he heard from Bishop Porteus.

"Dear Sir,

Your note of Friday last did indeed give me the sincerest satisfaction; and I thank God most devoutly for giving success to our efforts in a matter of such essential importance to the interests of morality and religion, and the due observance of the Lord's day, on which the very existence of religion depends in this country. I wish we may have equal success in another great point on Friday next, in the House of Lords. These two great events would add much to my comfort and pleasure in the present summer. I am, dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

B. LONDON.

"Fulham, June 16, 1806."

He took to himself no credit for this triumph. "How wonderfully," are his reflections on it, "does God teach us to look to Him! In the Sunday drilling, the House of Commons against us, and Windham himself against us, yet by Windham's having admitted the clause, I hope we shall keep it in."

All this had interrupted the preparation of his Report, and even on Saturday, when he was "intent on getting on with it, he had been forced to write to the Bishop of London about the Sunday drilling." It was to be presented on the Monday, when he "put

[31] Diary, June 12.

off the meeting of the Committee, thinking it would be better afterwards to have taken a day more, and done it well. And so it proved. Nobody asks afterwards how long it took, but how well done. Speaker complimented me much upon it. I carried it almost finished to the Committee, and all of them delighted with it, and most pleasingly liberal and kind."[32] It was a masterly composition; laying clearly down the true principles upon which the trade must be conducted; befriending the domestic clothier whilst it freed the manufacturer from all needless and harassing restrictions.

"The Report is excellent," writes a leading merchant from Huddersfield.[33] "I could not help saying that it was your composition, and I feel satisfied that I did." "Henry Lascelles, as well as others," is his own reflection,[34] "were most liberal and handsome towards me in all that regarded Report, doing full justice to it without an apparent grain of envy or detraction. How much better a praise than that of drawing up a good report!"

He watched meantime with an observant eye the progress of the new government. "Fox appears," he thought in the spring, "to be rather yielding to Grenville's foreign politics against peace."[35] "I hear from Lascelles that administration is highly unpopular on account of Windham's treatment of the volunteers; and the Princess of Wales's examination also creates much talk and dissatisfaction."[36]

[32] Diary, July 1.
[33] July 16, 1806.
[34] Diary, Sunday, July 13.
[35] Ib. April 5.
[36] Ib. July 30.

"Windham is a most-wretched man of business, no precision or knowledge of details, even in his own measures."

But the state of Mr. Fox's health soon occupied all his attention. June 27th. "William Smith with us after the House, and talking of poor Fox constrainedly; when at last, overcome by his feelings, he burst out with a real divulging of his danger—dropsy. Poor fellow, how melancholy his case! he has not one religious friend, or one who knows any thing about it. How wonderful God's providence! How poor a master the world! No sooner grasps his long-sought object than it shows itself a bubble, and he is forced to give it up." "I am much affected by his situation. In great danger apparently. Oh that I might be the instrument of bringing him to the knowledge of Christ! I have entertained now and then a hope of it. God can do all things. His grace is infinite both in love and power. I quite love Fox for his generous and warm fidelity to the Slave Trade cause. Even very lately, when conscious that he would be forced to give up parliament for the session at least, he said "he wished to go down to the House once more to say something on the Slave Trade."[37]

TO WILLIAM HEY ESQ.

"Broomfield, Aug. 1.

"My dear Sir,

How affecting an instance of the precarious nature of all human enjoyments is exhibited in Mr

[37] Journal, June 29.

Fox's present situation! No sooner is he able to grasp the prize, after which he has been so many years stretching in vain, and which, now that his great rival is no more, he might hope to possess without a competitor, than, behold, the bubble bursts in his hand, and discovers the hollowness of all sublunary good. But I cannot help thinking that Mr. Fox had, even before his illness, begun to taste that the gratifications of ambition are less sweet in the enjoyment than in the expectation. And many of his partisans who had anticipated a sort of golden age from his administration, begin to find that matters go on very much after the old sort.[38] I have myself long ceased to expect much from any men who are destitute of true religion. But then as I do not look for so much good from the men of the world, whose talents and even political and moral principles I approve in the main; so neither do I apprehend as much evil from the government of which I disapprove.—I have long thought the remark in Mr. Hume's Essays very wise; wherein he counsels moderation in our political expectancies, either of good or evil—especially in a country where the constitution contains so many safeguards against evil as ours does. I own my chief fear of the party now in power, has long been grounded rather on the loose, immoral principles of many of them. But Lords Grenville, Spencer, Sidmouth, Fitzwilliam, and lat-

[38] "How like is one government to another! We are expecting a riot in Westminster, and our light horse called out. What a triumph to the old government!" Letter from Henry Thornton Esq. to W. Wilberforce Esq.

terly I hope Lord Howick, are of a better quality; and I must do Mr. Fox the justice to say, that I have every reason to feel grateful to him for the conduct he has observed in relation to the Abolition of the Slave Trade; and Lord Grenville deserves the same commendation.

I am, my dear Sir,
very sincerely yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

The cause of Abolition was now thought by men in general to be gained. Immediately after the Resolutions of June 24th, he was "congratulated" by a friend, the owner of a large West India property, "on the Abolition of the Slave Trade being carried, a work which you have had at your heart these twenty years. You will say I am superstitious, but I do not think I have ever done well in the world since I voted against it. Nothing has succeeded with me. I do not mean to say I am distressed, but my money has seemed so much dross, it turns to no account, or like sand is blown away. As you know my hand-writing I will not put my name, and only add that I am, my dear W., very affectionately yours." [39]

"Let our gratitude be testified to that man," says a contemporary reviewer,[40] "who has begun and led through this glorious struggle—who has devoted to its success all his days and all his talents—who has retired from all recompence for his labours, save

[39] To W. Wilberforce Esq. June 27.
[40] Edin. Rev. No. XVI. July, 1806.

the satisfaction of doing good to his fellow-creatures—who, giving up to mankind what others have sacrificed to party, has preferred the glory of living in the recollection of a grateful world to the shining rewards of a limited ambition. We now rejoice to contemplate this distinguished person, standing as it were on the brink of his final triumph, in the greatest battle ever fought by human beings, and an object we really think of just envy to the most ambitious of mortals."

But he knew that the struggle was not yet over, and until it was, he would not rest. "I am sick of bustle, and long for quiet, but I will not leave the poor slaves in the lurch." He found only a new motive for exertion in seeing that "the Abolition looked more promising than for many years."[41] No measure was omitted which the most watchful prudence could suggest. The London Committee, which had reassembled in 1804, after an interval of seven years, and again held itself ready to act "subject to the call of Mr. Wilberforce,"[42] met regularly this year at his house "in Palace Yard;"[43] and he made arrangements in various quarters for providing the evidence which the House of Lords might possibly require. Frequent too were his discussions with Lord Grenville on the measures which should be prepared for the ensuing session. He found "Lord Grenville very open and friendly. He much desires to abolish by high and increasing duties; I strong against it."[44] "I do not relish the principle, and I foresee a danger from our

[41] Diary, June 28. [42] Minutes of Committee, March 23, 1804.
[43] Diary, July 16. [44] Ib. Aug. 12.

lowering our tone, and not rendering the Slave Trade a crime to be punished accordingly. Lord Grenville listened to me very attentively, but I cannot say that he appeared to be convinced by my arguments; yet from all that passed I am clear that Lord Grenville will give way to us very handsomely, if we cannot bring ourselves to come in to his opinion."[45] He called the same day on "Barham, and talked with him some time about his plan of cultivating with Chinese."[46] "He is really a generous fellow, and he seems to be actuated by a warm spirit of patriotism and philanthropy. I should therefore, as well as on account of his having been such an honourable exception to the conduct of his brother planters, be happy to subscribe towards his scheme; but that, as I frankly told him, I feared that if it should fail, which I could not but expect, (because his Chinese would be seduced away from him,) it would be stated, however unfairly, as the plan of the Abolitionists, and as a proof of its being impossible to cultivate the West India islands by any other means than Slave labour. I have absolutely no right to trifle with, or run the risk of impairing the credit of, any of our great principles."[47]

Nor were his labours over, when leaving the neighbourhood of London towards the end of August,

[45] To W. Smith Esq. Aug. 18. "We want parliament and the country to practise a notable piece of self-denial, and to do a magnificent act of justice,—to pass a kind of self-denying ordinance; and we can only hope that a parliament will do this heroic deed in some fit of heroism." Henry Thornton Esq. to W. Wilberforce Esq. Aug. 26.

[46] Diary.

[47] To W. Smith Esq. Aug. 18.

he "slipped into the snug and retired harbour of Lyme, for the purpose of careening and refitting."[48] He had long designed writing an Address upon the Slave Trade, and he now set resolutely to this task. "What was once known on that subject is now almost forgotten, and so many new members have come into parliament, that even for their sakes it is desirable to state what we do really hold." "Esteeming it also as one of the greatest honours of my life . . the greatest political honour . . that I have been called forth by Providence to be the advocate in this great cause, I think I ought to leave behind me some authentic record of the real nature and amount of the question."[49] He had long postponed this work, that it might come out just before the subject was debated in the House of Lords. "A pamphlet thrown in just in such circumstances, may be like a shot which hits between wind and water; it might prove of decisive efficiency. It will be well to supply people who wish to come over, with reasons for voting for us. For all men are not of the liberal, or rather lavish, turn of Lord De B. who, when a friend who had asked him to vote with him on a certain private bill, was going on to state the reasons he had to urge in support of the vote he wished his Lordship to give, 'Oh,' replied the peer, 'let alone your reasons, surely it is the part of a friend to give my vote without reasons, or against them.' My idea is to state the chief arguments that may be urged to prove the injustice and cruelty of the Slave Trade; its pernicious effects on the happi-

[48] Letter to Z. Macaulay Esq. [49] To H. Bankes Esq.

ness of Africa, and its obstruction of her civilization. Then to be very short upon the middle passage, and more particular on the West Indian branch of the subject."

With this he was now busily engaged. "Going on as usual in my Abolition tract; reading the evidence, and writing. Last night when going to bed heard there was a fire: a splendid, terrific scene. Night quite calm, so a river of smoke ran up to the sky, and when it had got perpendicularly high, stretched away like another milky way. Two houses burnt."[50] Here he was soon followed by the account of Mr. Fox's death. "So poor Fox is gone at last. I am more affected by it than I thought I should be."[51] "How speedily has he followed his great rival! Thurlow too gone. Independently of all other considerations, there is something which comes home to a man in the gradual quitting of the stage of those who are parts of the same dramatis personæ as himself. Even I seem to myself to be reminded that I am verging towards the close of the piece."[52] "Well, may we also be ready. I presume even tardy congratulations will not be unwelcome to a member of government on the bravery of our fine fellows in Calabria. How nobly they have sustained the credit of their country! Windham must be at least a foot higher. I hope he will not grow proportionably more alienated from the volunteers."[53]

In the midst of these quiet home occupations he

[50] Diary, Sept. 28. [51] [53] To Lord Sidmouth, Sept. 19.
[52] To Mrs. Hannah More, Sept. 15.

was "shocked by a letter from Lord Grenville announcing a dissolution of parliament."[54] "Sadly unsettled by the news. I now see I had better have gone off at once, as Muncaster says an opposition likely, and that they speak sanguinely as to success."[55] No time was to be lost. Upon the 21st he was on his way to Yorkshire. At "Blandford saw Fawkes's advertisement in the Courier, and first knew of opposition. Travelled on through Salisbury. Landlord asked me for Cheap Repository tracts, saying those I had left had done great good, had reformed some of his men, had done himself good; and public too."[56] On his road he addressed the following letter to his constituents.

TO THE GENTLEMEN, CLERGY, AND FREEHOLDERS OF THE COUNTY OF YORK.

"Nottingham, Oct. 24, 1806.

"Gentlemen,

The very unexpected tidings of an intended dissolution of parliament, found me in the opposite extremity of the kingdom, where I was residing with a view to the restoration of the health of a part of my family. Having learned from letters received on the road that an active canvass has been carrying on during my absence, I have hastened to you with the utmost expedition; and to as many of you as the time and as circumstances will allow, it is my earnest wish to pay my personal respects. But may I not be permitted without presumption to express a hope, that

[54] Diary, Oct. 15. [55] Ib. 18. [56] Diary.

a faithful service of two and twenty years may have prevented your minds from being found so utterly unoccupied, as that the mere circumstance of your being previously canvassed by another candidate should have been sufficient to pre-engage you? I am aware of the unseemliness of speaking of myself; but being now called to account to you for my execution of the important office which you have four times committed to me, I must unavoidably become an egotist. Conscious then that a member for Yorkshire is honoured with one of the most dignified trusts which a British subject can receive at the hands of his countrymen, I have endeavoured, it is not for me to say with what success, to maintain unimpaired the credit of that high station, by an independent and diligent discharge of its various duties. To your local concerns, some of them, both from their importance and from the numbers they affect, justly claiming the larger appellation of national interests, I have attended assiduously. But I have felt it my duty also to allot as large a share as possible of my time and thoughts to public and general questions; and in no preceding period of English history have so many of these, and of such extreme importance, come before the House of Commons in an equal space of time. In performing this most important part of my parliamentary service, I have had no personal objects either of interest or ambition. I have looked neither to emolument nor aggrandizement; remembering that I was the representative of Yorkshire, and that, especially in these days, and with my peculiar connexions, it became me to be strictly independent. I have been

the slave of no party; and if for the most part I have supported the measures of a distinguished statesman and patriot, now no more, it has been because I have judged them best calculated to promote the welfare of my country. When I have thought otherwise of any of them, I have publicly and actively opposed them; at no small cost of personal feeling, from appearing for the time to be numbered among the political opponents of a man, whose friendship constituted one of the highest honours of my private life.

"Such, I can truly affirm, has been the general course of my parliamentary conduct for two and twenty years; and having thus spent the best part of my life in your service, I trust that you will not lightly cast me off. Is it too much to say that this would be to teach the members for great counties, and especially those who may hereafter represent our own, which, from the high place it occupies in the scale of national importance, should hold out an example to all the rest, that he who would secure the continuance of your support, must resort to other expedients, and rest his hopes on other ground, than that of an upright, diligent, and independent discharge of the duties of his station? On that basis I have built hitherto, and not in vain. I trust you will not at length inculcate on me a different lesson—a lesson which, however, I frankly own to you, I can never learn. Grateful for all your liberal and disinterested kindness, which, let the event be what it may, will never be erased from my heart,

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your devoted Servant,

W. WILBERFORCE."

On the 24th he "got to Mansfield. Dined, and high charged. Called My Lord, and like Swiss inn frauds. At Rotherham, Joseph Walker's, heard of Lord Milton's active canvass and success for Fawkes, and that they knew not what part to take, being ignorant whether I should offer. It has been said in several places I meant to retire."

There were some other threatening appearances. "A very unfair advantage," he heard from Mr. Cookson, "has been taken at the expense of Mr. Lascelles and yourself, of the exasperated state of the clothiers in every direction of our Riding, as well as of the general class of workmen, who all make common cause with them, against any opposition to their combination system. I do not say that Fawkes has fomented this in any degree; there was no need. But matters are strangely altered. The clothiers who were before the Committee are violent beyond all conception, and the whole body in the two halls would not, we are perfectly convinced, produce ten votes for Mr. Lascelles. In Saddleworth they have all promised one vote for Mr. Fawkes to Sir George Armytage and the Walkers of Crow-nest: 'If Mr. Wilberforce joins Mr. Lascelles, they will give plumpers to Fawkes.' Here the rage against Mr. Lascelles is not less. A contemptuous expression that he is said to have uttered, is bandied about with great effect. Many are very sore against you, and all the Presbyterians are with Fawkes."

"Mr. Lascelles has the unqualified support of all the landed gentry and nobility. The intent is certainly to affright you into giving up. But I see no reason

why you should suppose that your old friends will desert you; honour, consistency, honesty, forbid it."

A second letter from Mr. Cookson, written two days later, but received together with the first, was more encouraging. "I am extremely sorry for Mr. Lascelles; yet self-preservation, as far as is compatible with friendship to him, is a fair principle. The clothiers are, to a man, exasperated against him. But on every side you have their second vote. In canvassing, this plain mode is observed on our side; 'Your vote for your two worthy representatives.' 'I never will give them both a vote; I have promised Fawkes.' 'To whom will you give your other?' 'Mr. Wilberforce.' 'Very well.' The trustees of the Cloth Halls are searching every corner, and take down the very galloways which each voter can bring, or rather which bring the voters. If they dared ask plumpers they would; but we have avenues enow to secure one vote for you in all the five districts, with the exception of some Presbyterians and tenants. Mr. Lascelles has applied to every lord and thane in the county for one vote, and where Lord Fitzwilliam and his party are not paramount, he will carry one vote. He has even their interest for it while he keeps apart from you.

"A convention of your friends on Monday morning seems essential."

"I was going to Halifax," he says, "but I now see I was providentially summoned to York, to hear intelligence. At Doncaster about twelve. Bacon Frank came to tell me the state of things there-

abouts. Sir G. Cooke, Wrightson, and all, with Lascelles, second votes. Heard of Fawkes's friends' active success. On Saturday, 25th. To York, and at Tadcaster met Lascelles, who going to York to consult Woolley. The first thing after I got to York I wrote to urge him to guard Markhams, if really his friends, not to give Fawkes their second votes, which however have done. Eat at Gray's, who most kind. Burgh came, and I wrote till one o'clock near seventy letters. Sunday. Minster and Richardson's. Sadly broken in on, though a little time to self. Monday, 27th. Friends meeting at York, and we consulted. Creyke, Bethell, Sir M. Sykes, there by breakfast; by dinner, R. C. Broadley, Sir R. Hildyard, Richard Thompson, (T. Thompson said he was not of consequence enough to come, but most active and kind, desiring to be put down for £500; but I was clear, subscription time not till after victory on nomination,) Cookson, Naylor, A. Turner, &c. Dined after consultation, during which I wrote near seventy letters. Evening to Leeds, where by twelve o'clock. Chatted with W. Hey till about one."

"Leeds, Oct. 28, 1806.

"My dear Stephen,

One line in answer to your kind letter, to say that I thank God all looks very promising, and I receive such marks of cordial affection as can only proceed from the overruling influence of Providence. I have little, if any, doubt of ultimate suc-

cess, so far as one may speak of any such thing as certain.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"James Stephen Esq."

"Tuesday. Went with merchants to Hall. Most kindly received. Then Whitehall, after speechifying. Drawn to the inn and home by the people. Friends met in the evening. Cloth Hall trustees called, and agreed to canvass for me. A most violent cry against Lascelles among the clothiers, but not for matter but manner of committee business. I heard that if he had come with me to the Hall, they would have let me pass, and then shoved down cloth in his way to stop him. One trustee told me that I treated him like a gentleman. That never so insulted. That if I had not got him a hearing, he should not have had one. Wednesday. Off after breakfast to Wakefield. Called at Naylor's in the country, and on to Barnsley, where Edmunds met me—Mr. Clarke and about twenty others—very friendly. On to Sheffield, where a large party waiting for me—Alderson, Tooker, and Walker, and fifty or sixty. Meant to go to Cutlers' Hall, and thence to Town Hall; but populace would drag us to Town Hall, where joined and thanked by cutlers for Iron-tax opposition—speechified them, and afterwards people, from Hall steps. Immense concourse. Sea of faces. I endeavoured to walk, but soon forced to take to carriage and dragged all round for half an hour (several run

over, but not much hurt); and to Angel again, where dined. Some queer talk between Lascelles's and Fawkes's friends for second votes. Lascelles at first for several days canvassed for self only, and declared to Cookson and several others that he meant to be perfectly neutral. Several of his real friends give their second votes to Fawkes, but my prime friends remain steadily friends to him, yet only so as not to endanger me; and the manufacturers every where busy for me. Lascelles's friends now talk of not taking any preference over me, and show wish to join interests."

He had often noticed the manly and independent conduct of Mr. Lascelles during the ten years that they had been associated in the representation of Yorkshire, and now saw with great regret the turn affairs were taking. "It seems pretty clear already," he tells Mrs. Wilberforce, "that I shall be first on the poll, if it comes to one, and, I am very sorry to say it, Mr. Fawkes the second. Some of Mr. Lascelles's friends have been in a degree the bringers-on of this business, from over-estimating their strength, and thinking that they could turn me out without great difficulty; whereas almost all the respectable people who are not connected with great men, when it comes to the point of choosing between Lascelles and me, give him up without hesitation."[57]

To return to the Diary. "Thursday,[58] up early and off before breakfast for Bradford. Fifty or sixty gentlemen on horseback met me a little way from town, and conducted me to the inn. After

[57] To Mrs. Wilberforce, Oct. 28. [58] Oct. 30.

cold collation and breakfast, to Cloth Hall and speechified: afterwards wrote letters; and they escorted me a mile or more on horseback on the road to Leeds. On Friday, off with William Hey to Wakefield—met a mile off, and drawn by people into town to inn, where addressed the people in the market-place—vast crowd, and dragged in carriage again to Naylor's, and thence to Dawson's. Letters, and off for Dewsbury, where dragged, and addressed again. Carriage broke and stopped. Called Mr. Pooley's. Heckmondwyke, dragged, and speechified again—dreadful roads. Reached Pye-nest, two miles beyond Halifax, (Edward's,) by a quarter past seven, evening—found party of fifteen or sixteen just sitting down to dinner, having waited for me. I grazed hard against loaded waggon when dark, going opposite directions. One inch nearer, had infallibly been broken, and probably overset. Providential; but astonishing not an accident of any kind to speak of since leaving Lyme; and I have borne little inclemencies of weather and fatigue, much beyond what I thought possible.

"Saturday, after breakfast large party of gentlemen came on horseback from Halifax to Pye-nest to convey me to town, though a very rainy morning. The horses drew me up the hill, and the people to Cloth Hall, about a mile. Much hurt on first entering to read account of Samuel Thornton's defeat. Some hissed, and kept crying, Fawkes for ever; I doubt not, from believing, not unreasonably, that some secret junction between Lascelles and me. (I have since found the hissers were the ringers, who had

been, by a little foolish zeal of our friends, prevented ringing for Fawkes.) I walked round the Hall—immense concourse, and afterwards addressed the people from the steps. Then Col. Hutton descanted on Lascelles's merits, and asked why not also there. Edwards explained. They would chair me to the inn. One man threw something which hit me on the forehead, happily not hard, and I kept watching afterwards. Amazing squeeze, and a very awkward operation. Taken to the Talbot. Bad, especially going through the gorges of the gates and narrow streets. Wrote letters till dinner, and Mr. W. Lawson came in about three, and told me report that Lascelles had resigned. Dinner, and we sent to W. Walker's for the letter, which written by Fawkes's brother. About eight o'clock I received a letter, express from Lascelles, to announce that he resigned. Dickey Walker, Thomas Atkinson, Mr. Whitacre, Edward W. Rawson, &c. &c. two rooms full; about sixty-five to seventy in all. Home, Pye-nest, and bed at one. Sunday.[59] Old church, Halifax. Dr. Coulthurst preached. Monday. Letters all morning, till with Edwards to Whitacre's, Wood Hall, near Huddersfield. Mr. Ratcliffe and party, supped and bed. Tuesday.[60] After breakfast Huddersfield to inn, where R. H. Beaumont, and many others. Went round Hall, and back to inn, where speechified the people."

From this point he returned towards York, where he was met by tidings of similar successes. "Russell and Bourne exceedingly active and zealous; and

[59] Nov. 2. [60] Nov. 4.

though few friends at York to form a personable committee, yet, by activity and good-will, almost every vote secured thereabouts. Burgh and young Gray indefatigable."[61] "You have become as familiar with a set of monarchs to your carriage, as Sesostris himself," wrote Dr. Burgh,[62] "and accordingly forget to tell us when they are harnessed and taken out of their stables for use; but you ought to tell us, for however absurd, it is a circumstance that works up a popular paragraph with great effect. We sincerely rejoice in your success, and have now to report still further sources of satisfaction." He returned to York on the 5th, the day before the nomination. "Sir Robert Hildyard moved, and C. Duncombe seconded me. Then I spoke, and satisfactorily, but forgot much I meant to say. Then Fawkes, able, but rather too florid. All quiet."[63]

After the election he paid a few visits omitted during his brief canvass, and before the beginning of December, was again settled in his house at Broomfield.

TO CAPTAIN BEDFORD, R. N.

"Near London, Dec. 7, 1806.

"My dear Sir,

I hope you would suggest to yourself as a plea for my silence; when I ought to have answered one or two very friendly and most interesting letters, which I received from you, that a contested election for Yorkshire finds a candidate in pretty abundant employment both for tongue, legs, and pen.

[61] Diary. [62] Oct. 29. [63] Diary, Nov. 6.

"I have great reason to be thankful for the kindness with which I was received. Indeed I can only ascribe it to that gracious Providence which can control at will the affections of men. I never took pains, though feeling the deepest sense of my constituents' kindness, to cultivate an interest; nay more, I have been very deficient in all personal attentions, owing to my health requiring me to live as quietly and regularly as I can, during the recess from parliament. I never attend races or even assizes, which members for Yorkshire before me used to do; and yet I have been elected five times, and never with more unanimity than the last. It really shows that there is still some public spirit among us; and that if a member of parliament will act an honest and independent part, his constituents (such at least of them as are themselves independent) will not desert him. Believe me always, with cordial esteem and regard,

My dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

As soon as he returned home he "renewed his Slave Trade pamphlet," and continued hard at work upon it; quitting it only to engage in the necessary preparations for the approaching campaign. "I should be glad to talk with you about our Slave Trade proceedings," Lord Grenville had written to him.[64] "My idea is to present to the House of

[64] Nov. 5.

Lords within the first days of meeting, a Bill simply abolishing the Trade, and declaring the being engaged in it to be a misdemeanour punishable at law. Should the subject be at the same time entered upon in the House of Commons? I rather think *Yes*, but I should wish you to decide for us." All now proceeded favourably. Lord Holland confidentially informed him, that " in the proposed treaty with North America, an international condemnation of the Slave-Trade was already contemplated;"[65] while from Portugal, the only country able at this time to carry on the Trade, Mr. Brougham told him, that " the measures lately adopted by England," had " produced an evident effect," and he adds his expectation, that " as we are generally accused of being rather too fond of colonies, and allowed to know something about ships and trade, our example may open the eyes of the Portuguese."[66]

Although the hearty co-operation of the ministry was of the utmost moment to him, he would not buy it by a servile deference. " Lord Grenville," he tells Mr. Babington, after one of their interviews, " thought there would be no opposition to Abbot. I am to second his being made Speaker. I offered and he accepted, and I told Lord Grenville I had done so, rather fearing from what I had heard, they meant to put up Adam."[67] Except upon this occasion, (Dec. 15th,) he continued intent upon his work till near the

[65] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Dec. [66] Ib. Nov. 9.
[67] To T. Babington Esq. Dec. 2.

end of January. At length, on the 27th, he made "a great effort to finish the book: which I did about six o'clock, and sent it to London, and it is to be out upon the 31st, by dint of extreme exertion, and sent to the Lords."[68]

"Near London, Jan. 30, 1807.

"My dear Muncaster,

You are always so considerate as well as so kind, that I am persuaded you would suggest to yourself the real cause of my silence, that I was writing against time, endeavouring to bring out my piece before the debate should come on in the House of Lords. I shall barely succeed; being promised that it shall be distributed among the peers to-morrow evening. It has been run up in a hurry, and yet I can't quite say of unseasoned timber, for the reasonings and most of the facts are the same which have been in my mind for years. So much for myself. You are I think the first friend to whom I have written for several days; I was going to say, and I believe truly, for some weeks. Lord Henry Petty acted it very powerfully last night, better certainly than I ever knew him perform before. I would have sent you, but for my not thinking of it, a printed paper which is circulated in London, in order to explain the new financial measures. But the plan is Lord Grenville's, as he told me himself this morning. —I am tired of thanking you for game, though you are

[68] Diary.

never tired of sending it. Farewell. Every blessing attend you; above all, the best.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He had expected much from the critical appearance of this book; and he was not disappointed. "Its beneficial effect," writes Mr. Roscoe,[69] "could not escape the observation of any one, who attended the discussion in the Lords." Its effect was greatly strengthened by its mild and generous temper towards the defenders of the system. "In admiring your triumph," writes Mr. Hayley,[70] "I also admire the lenity with which you adorn it. You treat your opponents with the mild magnanimity of a British admiral, who when the thunder of his cannon has reduced the ships of his enemies, exerts his fortitude and skill to rescue them from utter perdition." His continual appeal to higher views of human conduct, must in those perilous days have struck some thoughtful minds. "Is this a time," asks Dr. Burgh, after mentioning how the Council of Armagh had assigned the Slave Trade, which had existed between England and Ireland, as the judicial cause of the miseries which befell them both;[71] "is this a time to neglect the admonition? Let us deride our ancestors as we please, and deny the connexion of these two things, as cause and effect, with ever so much levity, we yet

[69] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Feb. 16. [70] Ib. March 21.

[71] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Oct. 4, 1806. Vid. Giraldus Cambrensis in Warton's Anglia Sacra.

cannot deny their coincidence; and it is not the part of wisdom, by continuing the evil on our part in the way of experiment, to challenge a repetition of the penalty at the hand of infinite justice."

This sentiment is brought out with great force in several parts of the Letter to the Freeholders of Yorkshire. "It is often rather in the way of a gradual decline," he says,[72] "than of violent and sudden shocks, that national crimes are punished. I must frankly therefore confess to you that in the case of my country's prosperity or decline, my hopes and fears are not the sport of every passing rumour; nor do they rise or fall materially, according to the sucessive reports we may receive of the defeats or victories of Buonaparte. But he who has looked with any care into the page of history, will acknowledge that when nations are prepared for their fall, human instruments will not be wanting to effect it: and lest man, vain man, so apt to overrate the powers and achievements of human agents, should ascribe the subjugation of the Romans to the consummate policy and powers of a Julius Cæsar, their slavery shall be completed by the unwarlike Augustus, and shall remain entire under the hateful tyranny of Tiberius, and throughout all the varieties of their successive masters. Thus it is, that most commonly by the operation of natural causes, and in the way of natural consequences, Providence governs the world. But if we are not blind to the course of human events, as well as utterly deaf to the plain instructions of revelation, we must believe

[72] Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, p. 349.

that a continued course of wickedness, oppression, and cruelty, obstinately maintained in spite of the fullest knowledge and the loudest warnings, must infallibly bring down upon us the heaviest judgments of the Almighty. We may ascribe our fall to weak councils or unskilful generals; to a factious and overburdened people; to storms which waste our fleets; to diseases which thin our armies; to mutiny among our soldiers and sailors, which may even turn against us our own force; to the diminution of our revenues, and the excessive increase of our debt: men may complain on one side of a venal ministry, on the other of a factious opposition; while amid mutual recriminations, the nation is gradually verging to its fate. Providence will easily find means for the accomplishment of its own purposes."

As soon as his book was out he was again engaged in action. The approaching debate called for every exertion. "Grenville told me yesterday he could not count more than fifty-six, yet had taken pains, written letters, &c. The Princes canvassing against us, alas."[73] It seemed clear that he would have no easy triumph. Two Cabinet ministers never withdrew their opposition, and the Dukes of Clarence and of Sussex declared openly against the Bill, speaking, as it was understood, the sentiments of all the reigning family. Yet the ice of prejudice was rapidly dissolving; and when he visited Lord Grenville on the morning of the debate, "he went over the list of peers, and was sanguine, counting on above seventy

[73] Diary, Jan. 31.

in all."[74] The same evening came the crisis of the struggle. "House of Lords, Abolition Bill till five in the morning, when carried, 72 and 28 proxies to 28 and 6 proxies. Grenville's famous speech. Duke of Gloucester highly respectable. Moira and Holland very good. Westmoreland out-blackguarding the blackguard. Sidmouth beyond his own precedent in this cause. Lord Selkirk sensible and well-principled. Lord Rosslyn good and sensible. Lord Eldon humiliating. Clarence worse in point of execution than usual. Brougham, Babington, and I chatted for three quarters of an hour, and bed past six."[75]

The next day he again attended the "House of Lords. Bill in Committee. Opponents wanting us to strike out from the preamble, 'justice and humanity.' Lord Lauderdale very good."[76] The fate of the Slave Trade now seemed indeed to be sealed. "The Bishop of Durham, the Bishop of London, and many others, both last night and to-day, shook me by the hand and congratulated me. Stephen and I went home with Lord Grenville about the Bill."[77] He had given notice in the Commons, upon the 29th of January, that if it was delayed he should there originate a corresponding measure. But it passed rapidly the Upper House; and on the 10th of February "came from the Lords. A few words from Gascoigne, Hibbert, &c. and Lord Howick."[78] The next day he told Lord Muncaster—

[74] Diary, Feb. 3. [75] Ib. Feb. 4. [76] Ib. [77] Ib. [78] Diary

"London, Feb. 11, 1807

"My dear Friend,

At length we can announce to our friends when the Abolition Bill will be contested in the House of Commons. On Friday sen'night, Feb. 20th, (it was settled last night too late for the post,) counsel will be heard; and if they should detain us till it be too late to enter with decency into the debate, the battle will be on the following Monday, 23rd instant. Our opponents are making their utmost exertions, and by what I hear, are proceeding with considerable art and plausibility, so that I am afraid of the stedfastness of such of our friends as may not be rooted in principle. It gives me the most cordial satisfaction to know that you mean to attend; the more so, because it has been rumoured you would not,[79] though I stoutly maintained that I was sure you would, unless prevented by some insuperable obstacle.

"I have been so pressed for several days past, as to have had no time to look at newspapers, but I am told they gave no account of the debate in the Lords. This is much to be regretted, for Lord Grenville's speech especially was one of the most statesman-like I ever heard, and it was universally acknowledged to deserve this character. It may seem, except to a friend to whom I may think aloud, indelicate in me to praise it, because the close of it contained one of the handsomest compliments to me that ever was delivered. It would have made your warm, affectionate

[79] Lady Muncaster had died Nov. 23, 1806.

heart overflow with tenderness. Certainly Lord Grenville has acted nobly, and he deserves the more praise, because for many years I did not behave so well to him, nor even think so well of him, as I ought to have done. Also his natural temper is not that of warmth. The high tone of morals which he took may be essentially beneficial to the country, as it was truly honourable to himself. The young Duke of Gloucester did himself very great credit, both for talents and principles. Lord Moira's speech was also excellent. Lord Selkirk (have you read his excellent publication, Scotch Emigration?) spoke most sensibly, but with so low a voice that he could scarce be heard. Our old friend Lord Eldon grieved me. Sidmouth fretted and hurt me. Westmoreland bespattered me; but really it was a double pleasure to be praised by Lord Grenville and abused by Lord Westmoreland. The Duke of Clarence was less fluent, at least less able, than formerly. Our success altogether greatly surpassed my expectations. I must break off. Kind remembrances.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He had learned from frequent disappointments to look at the promise of success with a calm and tempered joy; but more from excess of anxiety than any exact apprehensions of danger. "I receive congratulations from all, as if all done. Yet I cannot be sure. May it please God to give us success. Lord Grenville's speech concluded with a most hand-

some compliment to me, and several peers now speak with quite new civility. How striking to observe Pitt and Fox both dead before Abolition effected, and now Lord Grenville, without any particular deference from Court, carries it so triumphantly! But let us not be too sure."[80] Again the next day—"An Abolition Committee. Looking at the list of the House of Commons. A terrific list of doubtfuls. Lord Grenville not confident on looking at Abolition list; yet I think we shall carry it too. Several West Indians with us. How popular Abolition is, just now! God can turn the hearts of men."[81] "What an awful moment is this!" is his entry two days later.[82] "The decision of the great question approaches. May it please God, who has the hearts of all in His hands, to turn them as in the House of Lords; and enable me to have a single eye, and a simple heart, desiring to please God, to do good to my fellow-creatures, and to testify my gratitude to my adorable Redeemer."

During the following week, counsel was heard against the Bill on behalf of the West India planters and merchants, (nearly all of whom opposed it,) and of the agents of Trinidad and Jamaica, who petitioned the House severally against it. But opposition now brought out more clearly the strength of the Abolitionists. "Lord Howick in earnest and very pleasing. Our prospects brighten."[83] And on the day before the second reading—"Never surely had I more cause for gratitude than now, when carrying

[80] Diary, Feb. 11.
[81] Ib. Feb. 13.
[82] Journal, Sunday, Feb. 15.
[83] Diary, Feb. 20.

the great object of my life, to which a gracious Providence directed my thoughts twenty-six or twenty-seven years ago, and led my endeavours in 1787 or 1788. O Lord, let me praise Thee with my whole heart: for never surely was there any one so deeply indebted as myself; which way soever I look I am crowded with blessings. Oh may my gratitude be in some degree proportionate."[84]

It was in this spirit that he entered the House upon the 23rd of February. "Busy for Lord Howick in the morning. Friends dined before House. Slave Trade debate. Lord Howick opened—embarrassed and not at ease, but argued ably. Astonishing eagerness of House; six or eight starting up to speak at once, young noblemen, &c. and asserting high principles of rectitude. Lord Milton very well. Fawkes finish, but too much studied, and cut and dried. Solicitor-General excellent; and at length contrasted my feelings, returning to my private roof, and receiving the congratulations of my friends, and laying my head on my pillow, &c., with Buonaparte's, encircled with kings his relatives. It quite overcame me."[85] The House was little less affected by Sir Samuel Romilly's address. When he entreated the young members of parliament to let this day's event be a lesson to them, how much the rewards of virtue exceeded those of ambition; and then contrasted the feelings of the Emperor of the French in all his greatness with those of that honoured individual, who would this day lay his head upon

[84] Journal, Sunday, Feb. 22. [85] Diary, Feb. 23.

his pillow and remember that the Slave Trade was no more; the whole House, surprised into a forgetfulness of its ordinary habits, burst forth into acclamations of applause. They had seen the unwearied assiduity with which, during twenty years, he had vainly exhausted all the expedients of wisdom; and when they saw him entering with a prosperous gale the port whither he had been so often driven, they welcomed him with applause "such as was scarcely ever before given," says Bishop Porteus, "to any man sitting in his place in either House of parliament."[86] So full was his heart of its own deep thoughts of thankfulness that he scarcely noticed these unusual honours. "Is it true," Mr. Hey asked him,[87] "that the House gave you three cheers upon the conclusion of the Solicitor-General's speech? And if so, was not this an unprecedented effusion of approbation?" "To the questions you ask me," he replies,[88] "I can only say that I was myself so completely overpowered by my feelings when he touched so beautifully on my domestic reception, (which had been precisely realized a few evenings before, on my return from the House of Lords,) that I was insensible to all that was passing around me."

The debate proceeded with little show of opposition, except from one West Indian planter, who gave him an opportunity of replying in a speech "distinguished for splendour of eloquence and force of argument;"[89]

[86] Hodgson's Life of Porteus, p. 221.
[87] To W. Wilberforce Esq. Feb. 28. [88] To W. Hey Esq. March 2.
[89] Ann. Reg.

and then came the cheering issue. "At length divided, 283 to 16. A good many came over to Palace Yard after House up, and congratulated me. John Thornton and Heber, Sharpe, Macaulay, Grant and Robert Grant, Robert Bird and William Smith, who in the gallery."[90] It was a triumphant meeting. "Well, Henry," Mr. Wilberforce asked playfully of Mr. Thornton, "what shall we abolish next?" "The lottery, I think," gravely replied his sterner friend. "Let us make out the names of these sixteen miscreants; I have four of them," said William Smith. Mr. Wilberforce, kneeling, as was his wont, upon one knee at the crowded table, looked up hastily from the note which he was writing—"Never mind the miserable 16, let us think of our glorious 283." This was Reginald Heber's first introduction to Mr. Wilberforce. Heber had entered the room with a strong suspicion of his principles,[91] but he left it saying to his friend John Thornton, "How an hour's conversation can dissolve the prejudice of years!" Perhaps his witnessing this night the Christian hero in his triumph after the toil of years, may have been one step towards his gaining afterwards the martyr crown at Trichinopoly.

The victory was thus gained, but its fruits were to be gathered in with care. The first idea had been to prohibit the Slave Trade, but to enact no specific penalties against its illicit practice. But "we agreed,"

[90] Diary, Feb. 23.

[91] Heber had resided in the same parish with Sir Richard Hill; and he had imagined that his sentiments, which he deemed disaffected to the church, were shared by Mr. Wilberforce.

he writes to Mr. Stephen after a conference with Lord Howick and Romilly,[92] "that the division of last night has quite changed the state of things, and that it is highly desirable now to put in the penalties. It was settled to send the clauses to Vivian, and to desire you and him to meet and talk them over together." The next day was appointed for a public fast. "I was forced to write to the Duke of Gloucester, from whom, as also from Lord Grenville, most kind and pious letters of congratulation. Then St. Margaret's church. Returning, talked with Stephen on Slave Trade Abolition Bill. Then Lord Howick sent for me about clauses, and not back till late."[93] Lord Grenville had written, "suggesting the expediency of taking advantage of their present strength to render the Bill as perfect as possible,"[94] and desiring to see the clauses prepared. "How astonishing," says Mr. Wilberforce that evening, "is our success, and the eagerness and zeal of the House now, when the members have been so fastidious as scarce to hear a speech about it! six or eight getting up at once, and the young noblemen especially. Rose and Castlereagh went away without dividing. Roscoe mild, quiet, unaffected, and sensible. Poor Muncaster came up. Brougham useful to Lord Howick about Slave Trade. Every body taking me by the hand; and several voting with us for the first time."[95]

For some weeks, however, he continued "very

[92] Feb. 21.
[93] Diary, Feb. 25.
[94] Lord Howick to W. Wilberforce Esq. Feb. 25.
[95] Diary, Feb. 25.

much occupied, making other matters bend to the Abolition."[96] But on one important occasion of a different kind he took an active part, opposing the increased grant which ministers designed to give to the Roman Catholic College at Maynooth. Popery, he was convinced, was the true bane of Ireland, and he deemed it nothing less than infatuation to take any steps for its encouragement. This opinion he fearlessly asserted. "I am not," he said,[97] "one of those men who entertain the large and liberal views on religious subjects, insisted on with so much energy by the honourable gentlemen on the other side; I am not so much like a certain ruler, of whom it has upon a late occasion been so happily said, that he was an honorary member of all religions." It was much to the credit of the government that this open opposition in no degree diminished their zeal for Abolition; and four days afterwards, when Lord Howick proposed to him that the declaration concerning justice and humanity should be omitted from the preamble of the Bill, he added, "In this, however, and in every thing else connected with this question, I should wish to be guided as far as possible by your opinion. The whole merit of this great victory is yours, and in contributing my humble assistance, I should be most unwilling to set up my judgment in contradiction to yours, upon a matter on which you have so much better a right, and are so much better qualified, to decide."[98] To this politic change he gave his consent. "Do not

[96] Diary. [97] March 4.
[98] Lord Howick to W. Wilberforce Esq. March 8.

suppose," he says,[99] "that I have given up the words Justice and Humanity. The preamble has not suffered in its substantial force, nor have we descended from our moral elevation." Upon the 16th came on the "debate on third reading of Abolition Bill. I made no use of all the information I had collected. Long debate. Windham sophistical. I answered him warmly, and I was told, well."[100] "18th. Carried up the Bill to the Lords;" at which time it was supposed to be "clear that government was out, or as good as out."[101] This "filled him with alarm about the Abolition Bill, lest it should fall through between the two ministries, neither being responsible, and the Bill perhaps being thrown out by the absence of friends, and the attendance of sturdy Africans and West Indians, the Princes taking the lead." To his joy he was assured by Mr. Perceval, whose attachment to the cause was above all suspicion, "that Lords Eldon and Hawkesbury, as well as Castlereagh, declare that now they will lend themselves to any thing needful for giving effect to the measure. He said that he would write to the Duke of Cumberland, who the King's confidant, and takes on him to be the leading man."[102]

But the honour of passing such a measure was not to be reserved for the new administration. Upon the 23rd of March he "travelled about all morning between Speaker, Leigh, and Lord Grenville; parliamentary office, and Whittam's; about error in the Abolition

[99] To Rev. Francis Wrangham, March 11.
[100] Diary, March 16.
[101] Ib. March 18.
[102] Ib. March 21.

Bill." The debate upon the third reading in the Lords came on, the same evening, and the Bill was passed. "Lord Westmoreland's coarse opposition. Lord Grenville's congratulation." Two days afterwards, on the feast of the Annunciation, it "received the royal assent. . the Lord Chancellor, Lord Auckland, and Lord Holland, being the royal commissioners". . and passed into a law. It was the last act of the old ministry. "A meeting of the Slave Trade Committee in Palace Yard, knew it not till afterwards." [103]

And now his labours were indeed completed. Congratulations poured in upon him from every quarter. "To speak," wrote Sir James Mackintosh from the other Indies,[104] "of fame and glory to Mr. Wilberforce, would be to use a language far beneath him; but he will surely consider the effect of his triumph on the fruitfulness of his example. Who knows whether the greater part of the benefit that he has conferred on the world, (the greatest that any individual has had the means of conferring,) may not be the encouraging example that the exertions of virtue may be crowned by such splendid success? We are apt petulantly to express our wonder that so much exertion should be necessary to suppress such flagrant injustice. The more just reflection will be, that a short period of the short life of one man is, well and wisely directed, sufficient to remedy the miseries of millions for ages. Benevolence has hitherto been too often disheartened by frequent failures; hundreds

[103] Diary, March 25. [104] Bombay, July 27, 1807.

and thousands will be animated by Mr. Wilberforce's example, by his success, and (let me use the word only in the moral sense of preserving his example) by a renown that can only perish with the world, to attack all the forms of corruption and cruelty that scourge mankind. Oh what twenty years in the life of one man those were, which abolished the Slave Trade! How precious is time! How valuable and dignified is human life, which in general appears so base and miserable! How noble and sacred is human nature, made capable of achieving such truly great exploits!"

No selfish exultation disturbed his heartfelt joy. "God will bless this country," was his almost prophetic declaration. "The first authentic account of the defeat of the French has come to-day." "The course of events" hitherto had been "such as human wisdom and human force" had "in vain endeavoured to control or resist. The counsels of the wise" had "been infatuated, the valour of the brave turned to cowardice. Though the storm" had "been raging for many years, yet instead of having ceased, it" appeared "to be increasing in fury; the clouds which" had "long been gathering around," had, "at length, almost overspread the whole face of the heavens with blackness. In this very moment of unexampled difficulty and danger, those great political characters, to the counsels of the one or the other of whom the nation" had "been used to look in all public exigencies," had "both been taken from us."[105] But from this time

[105] Letter to the Freeholders of Yorkshire.

the tide was turned. In the very year which closed this hateful traffic, that series of events began, which ended in the victories of Wellington and the fall of Buonaparte.

For himself, all selfish triumph was lost in unfeigned gratitude to God. "I have indeed inexpressible reasons for thankfulness on the glorious result of that struggle which, with so many eminent fellow-labourers, I have so long maintained. I really cannot account for the fervour which happily has taken the place of that fastidious, well-bred lukewarmness which used to display itself on this subject, except by supposing it to be produced by that almighty power which can influence at will the judgment and affections of men."[106]

"How wonderfully the providence of God has been manifested in the Abolition Bill! I will hereafter note down all the particulars. The present ministry no sooner have got it through than they are going out. Again, had we not altered the preamble, by leaving out the words 'justice and humanity,' preserving the full force, there might have been a plea, since the news of an insurrection, for the Lords reconsidering; they might have found means of putting it off for another year, and our hopes might have been defeated. Again, Lord Grenville and Lord Howick were earnest for two Bills; one the general principle, and the other the penalties and regulations. I most strongly against this, even when every one else gave way; which not usual with me. If divided, the second Bill would probably have been lost. Then the

[106] To the Rev. Francis Wrangham.

moment the ministry began to venture the country's happiness on a popish foundation, they find their ground cut from under them."

"Oh what thanks do I owe the Giver of all good, for bringing me in His gracious providence to this great cause, which at length, after almost nineteen years' labour, is successful!" [107]

[107] Journal, March 22.

CHAPTER XXI.

MARCH 1807 TO JUNE 1807.

Change of ministers—Wilberforce's embarrassment—His judgment of the plan of encouraging popery—County patronage—Letter to Creyke—Parliament suddenly dissolved—Hon. Henry Lascelles and Lord Milton candidates for Yorkshire—Magnitude of the contest—Extraordinary canvass—Immense subscription for Wilberforce—His speech at Hull—Election stratagems—He is lowest on the poll, but soon heads his competitors—Zeal and liberality of his friends.

MR. WILBERFORCE had been no unmoved spectator of the recent change of ministry. Most anxiously for the sake of his great cause, had he watched the several steps which led to their rupture with the King.

"March 19th. I hear that ministry gave up all, and the King was not satisfied without a solemn pledge that they would never propose again to him any extension of power to Roman Catholics. I see not how they could consent to that; though it has been a very foolish thing to bring the second question [1] forward, having resolved not to press the first." [2] "20th. Called at Lord Grenville's, who explained to me all the business, and showed me the

[1] The Bill for admission of Romanists into the army, &c.
[2] Their admission into parliament.

King's and the Cabinet's letters. The ministry gave up all; but reserved the right both of stating their own private opinion, and of proposing from time to time, such measures as they might deem necessary for the well-being of the country. Peace will probably be made between France and Russia this winter, and then Buonaparte will bend the whole force of his empire against us, and invade Ireland. Then, it is said, unless we can appease the Roman Catholics, what hope have we of stemming the torrent? Still I feel no comfort in grounding our safety on such a bottom. On this the King thought they would always be teasing him with some new proposition, and taking any favourable occasion for pressing their measure; ergo, better decide at once. He asked Lord Grenville whether the opinion he had stated was the final decision of the Cabinet, and on their saying, Yes; 'Then,' said the King, 'I must look about me.'"[3]

With these expectations of an immediate rupture, he could not but feel alarm. Nor was his anxiety over with the passing of the Abolition Bill. He was bound by his general principles to support the new ministry. "It is in one grand particular the same question as in 1784. My then principles, to which I still adhere, would govern my vote, even if I did not think so favourably of their leader, Perceval, as I do."[4] But this he could not do without the appearance of ingratitude towards those who had assisted him so warmly in the Abolition struggle. Even to appear ungrateful gave him no little pain; but the law of duty was

[3] Diary, March 20.

[4] Diary and letter.

absolute, and he obeyed it strictly, finding only a new proof that "politics are a most unthankful business." "The debt of gratitude," he told his constituents, "which is due to the late ministry from myself, I shall ever be ready to acknowledge, and by all legitimate methods to repay; but I have no right to recompense their services by my parliamentary support. That is not mine to give or withhold at pleasure." [5]

"I am glad to find," was therefore his conclusion, "that Bankes, Babington, and I, and Grant, and Henry Thornton too, all settle down into trying the new ministry, and treating them as their measures shall deserve." While moreover he acquitted the late ministry of all blame in their treatment of the King . . "the Yorkshire papers charge them with deceiving him: nothing more false I verily believe," [6] . . he was from the first suspicious of the course upon which they were entering. "My situation and feelings," he told Mr. Wrangham as early as the 24th of March, "are very embarrassing from the conflicting considerations and emotions which come into play. On the one hand, Lord Grenville, Howick, and Henry Petty have acted most zealously and honourably in the business of Abolition, and the success of that great measure, (for, blessed be God, we may now say it has succeeded, though in form the Bill has two stages more to pass through,) is, under a gracious Providence, to be ascribed to their hearty efforts. Yet on the other hand I feel deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of not embarking on a Roman Catholic

[5] Speech at York. [6] Diary.

bottom, (if I may so term it,) the interest and well-being of our Protestant empire."

On this ground he had boldly resisted the ministerial grant for enlarging the college of Maynooth, even when the tardy success of twenty years of labour seemed to be endangered by such honest opposition. The more he reflected upon this matter, the clearer became his judgment against the line of policy upon which the old ministry were entering: twice in the following session he pressed upon the House, that it was not greater political privileges, but a moral and religious education, which the Irish Romanists required. No efforts were spared to gain him over; but there was a simplicity of view in all his public conduct, which made such attempts absolutely powerless. "*You* have the power to do more good at present," Sir J. C. Hippisley wrote to him, "than any other man in the kingdom." And from the Rev. Sydney Smith he heard—"I hope, now you have done with Africa, you will do something for Ireland. There is no man in England, who, from activity, understanding, character, and neutrality, could do it so effectually as Mr. Wilberforce. And when this country conceded, a century ago, an establishment to the Presbyterian church, it is horrible to see four millions of Christians of another persuasion instructed by ragged priests, and praising their Creator in wet ditches. I hope you will stir in this matter, and then we will vote for the consulship for life, and you shall be perpetual member for Yorkshire."

To Mr. Hey he cautiously opened this increasing bias of his judgment.

TO WILLIAM HEY ESQ.

"London, April 2, 1807.

"My dear Sir,

I am uncomfortably circumstanced in respect to the late ministry. They (at least the leading members of the Cabinet) supported the Abolition Bill so strenuously, and were to such a degree the instruments of our success, that it gives me pain to appear to desert them, so soon as they have done me all the good they could. I am glad that I happened some time ago to state to Lord Grenville my difference of opinion as to the right policy to be observed towards the Roman Catholics in Ireland; that after all you could grant them, so much would still remain behind as to prevent their being ever cordially attached to a Protestant government, of which a Protestant church establishment formed a part; that so long as the bulk of the Irish should be Roman Catholics, the Protestants and the friends of Great Britain would be, in truth, a garrison in an enemy's country; and that our great endeavour ought to be to enlighten, and thereby, as I trust, to convert the Roman Catholics: much, I verily believe, might be done in that way in twenty or thirty years; and on the contrary, the college of Maynooth, . . a vote for the doubling the foundation of which passed a few weeks ago, so as to send out four hundred Roman Catholic priests every four years; the most pernicious measure, in my judgment,

which has been assented to for many years, . . the college of Maynooth alone will, if not checked, increase beyond measure the Roman Catholic body.

"I will frankly confess to you, that though at first I felt hurt by the sudden change, from the prospect of party contentions, with all their evils, &c. (and gratitude had a share in producing the pain,) yet on cool reflection, I begin to become not only reconciled to it, but thankful for it, as the means of arresting a very dangerous progress on which we had entered. But all this I say in strict confidence; for I should appear the most ungrateful man living, to those who do not or cannot discriminate between personal feelings and public duty."

To another Yorkshire gentleman he writes a few days later.

TO RALPH CREYKE ESQ. MARTON, BRIDLINGTON.

"London, April 11.

"My dear Sir,

I have been wishing for two or three days to write to you, but have not had the opportunity; and having been preyed on by a succession of visitors on business, till I have been despoiled of my whole morning, I must now be as short as possible; but I am unwilling to delay writing altogether.

"I hear Mr. Duke Constable[7] is dangerously ill, and I am, of course, reminded of you. It has always appeared to me that such situations as those which he

[7] Receiver-General for Yorkshire.

has so long filled, ought to be allotted to those country gentlemen, who, without having such large fortunes (taking their families into account) as to render an accession of income of no importance to them, have discharged those most useful, though perhaps least requited, of all public duties, the offices of justice of peace, commissioner of taxes, militia officers, &c. The superior ability with which you have filled all these various situations, as well as your long-tried disinterestedness, activity, and patriotism, in short, your character, whether for public merits or private worth, (I really must forget for once that I am writing *to* you, and speak as I should express myself of you,) point you out so clearly as the man who, in our part, has best entitled himself to national remuneration; that I am persuaded if the old process were repeated, your name, like that of (I think) Themistocles, would be given in second by all, and would be read by all, in each instance with one single exception, as first, when the question was, who best deserves such a recompence of his services? I have been several times applied to by respectable friends, but to the few to whom I could speak openly I have hinted your superior claim. I now write to inquire whether you would like the situation, supposing it to fall vacant? It has been usual, I believe, for the county member to be complimented on these occasions; though I find it is not always so, for Lord Uxbridge is just giving away the Receiver-Generalship for Warwickshire. I can only say, that if I should have any voice in the disposal of the situation, when it becomes vacant,

there is no man in whose favour I should with as much willingness exert myself as yourself; and while the consciousness of your well-founded claim would greatly relieve me from the unpleasantness of asking a favour of administration, I should rejoice in the happy coincidence between the dictates of public duty and the impulse of private friendship. I scarcely need add, but it is better always to be perfectly explicit, that I cannot promise to apply at all events for the office when vacant, because my so doing or not must depend on the way in which, at the time, I may happen to be circumstanced with the government of the day. But you and I understand each other so well, as to have no difficulties on this head. The value of the office I am told is about £1000 per annum, but on particulars we may confer after I receive your general decision.

"Now a word or two about your letter just received. I have written to Gambier on the subject, and should be most happy to compensate the hard usage of which I must say your nephew may justly complain; but I am under some difficulty myself, arising from my present situation as connected with the state of parties. I have been highly obliged by Lord Grenville's, Howick's, and H. Petty's conduct respecting the Abolition, and yet I am bound by a sense of duty to support the present government. But I know I shall, by so doing, incur much misrepresentation and calumny; and as I shall be closely watched, I am very anxious that it should not be stated in the papers that Mr. W. had just been asking a favour of the present

Admiralty; as I remember Lord Harrowby being paragraphed for a much better thing. I own your nephew's claim is in my judgment a claim of equity; and what, if you or I were inheritors of an estate under a will, we should feel ourselves bound, in a similar case, to satisfy. Still, matters are stated generally; and partly from indolence, partly from the opposite to candour, (I won't use a harsh word,) men will not listen to explanations. Here is all my difficulty; but I hope to get over it, if not just now, yet by and by.

"The late ministers are rushing on, in my judgment, to their own destruction. Their policy as a party, as well as higher considerations, should urge them to moderation now, and to making their stand against the measures of the new government. But who, as Macbeth says in his feigned passion, can be at once temperate, &c.

"Farewell. With kind remembrances to your son and daughters,

Believe me ever most truly yours,

W. Wilberforce.

"The late majority, which I was prevented from joining by a real, and for a time serious, indisposition, has removed my fears of a dissolution of parliament."

Under this belief he was looking forward to a busy session. "To Canning's, Secretary of State's office; about German merchants—(Hanseatic ships release) —confiscated property. Important subjects are now— Whitbread's Poor Bill—speech printed—political state

of things, and my awkward situation—Apprentice Bill, —Smithfield Market Bill—Woollen Manufacture Bill—Londonderry Committee, of which chairman. I shall have to take part in approaching debates."[8]

In the midst of these anticipations he was "astonished by a letter from Perceval announcing a dissolution." This was most unwelcome intelligence. The angry feelings which had cost Mr. Lascelles his election in the last year were by no means allayed; and party spirit had been stirred to an unwonted pitch by late public events. He learned at once that his old colleague would again take the field; that Mr. Fawkes, though a man of large fortune, shrunk from the expenses of a contest; and that Lord Milton came forward in his place. No one could foresee the result of such a collision. In their calmer hours indeed all moderate men might think their own victory dearly purchased by the loss of their independent representative; but such feelings would be forgotten in the delirium of the conflict: while it was more than probable that the leaders in the strife would view with no great dissatisfaction, a result which would share again between their families the representation of the county. Whatever was its issue, the contest must be ruinous to any man of ordinary fortune. "Lord Harewood" was "ready to spend in it his whole Barbadoes property,"[9] and Wentworth House was not less threatening in its preparations. Mr. Wilberforce's fortune would stand no such demands; "and the plan of a subscription," said a leading poli-

[8] Diary. [9] Ib.

tician in an adjoining county, "may answer very well in a borough, but it is hopeless where things must be conducted upon such a scale as in the county of York." Many of his friends dissuaded him from entering on the contest; but the moral importance which he attached to it, determined him to venture the attempt, and after "sending on the 25th of April, expresses to Leeds and other places," and hearing on the 27th "the King's speech read by the Speaker round the table to standers-by . . recommendation of union caught at by opposition" [10] . . he set off himself for York.

Nothing passes away more rapidly than the interest of an ordinary election contest. But that which engaged all Yorkshire in 1807, deserves more lasting remembrance. It was even then unique; and since, from the changes of 1833, it can never be repeated, a more minute account of its events may possess much interest for the future student of English manners in the beginning of the nineteenth century. He left London upon the 28th, after "a narrow escape from breaking my leg" (an accident which would have been fatal to his hopes) "just when setting out—Deo gratias — how are we always in His hands!" [11] Upon the 29th he entered Yorkshire, and was immediately engaged in the full bustle of the contest. "Halted afternoon at Doncaster. Heard for certain Lord Milton standing. But I doing well at Doncaster. Travelled on to York, where about twelve. Sent for Burgh, and talked to him till almost one; all my friends going to

[10] Diary. [11] Ib.

Cambridge for Gibbs and Palmerston. I in a scrape from having recommended Lord Henry Petty. I wrote to Perceval fully, because he canvassing for me." A meeting of his friends had been held on the preceding day at York; but whilst "Mr. Lascelles and Lord Milton had already engaged canvassing agents, houses of entertainment, and every species of conveyance in every considerable town,"[12] six important days elapsed before any number of his friends could be brought together. At length, upon the 4th of May, his principal supporters met at York, and agreed to establish local committees throughout every district, in the hope that voluntary zeal would supply the place of regular canvassing agents. Meanwhile he himself set out upon a hasty canvass of the West Riding, and traversed all its more populous parts with his usual rapidity and success. "Time was," as he said the year before, "when I did not dislike such scenes;"[13] but he had now reached a calmer age, and "sickened at a contest."[14] In the tumult of popular applause which waited on his canvass, "I look forward," he tells Mr. Hey, "with pleasure to the prospect of a quiet Sunday with you, and rejoice that half the week is gone by; yet I am daily, hourly experiencing the never-failing mercies of Heaven." "I have often told you," he writes from Mr. Hey's to Mrs.

[12] Manuscript Account of the Election of 1807, by David Russel Esq.

[13] "After all," said the Duke of Norfolk, who had been an active partisan of Lord Milton's, "what greater enjoyment can there be in life, than to stand a contested election for Yorkshire, and to win it by one?"

[14] To Lord Muncaster.

Wilberforce, "that I never enjoy this blessed day so much as during a time of peculiar bustle and turmoil. It seems as if God graciously vouchsafed a present reward for our giving up to Him a liberal measure of that time and attention, which worldly men would deem necessary to the success of their worldly plans."

The nomination came on at York upon the 13th, and nearly every hand was held up in his favour. "Morritt's excellent speech. Lord Milton pretty well. I but middling—only in reply, so seemed spirited." So far all was promising; but how the expenses of the approaching contest could be safely met, was a most serious question. The nomination was followed by a meeting of his friends, at which this subject was brought forward. He at once "declared with manly firmness, that he never would expose himself to the imputation of endeavouring to make a seat in the House of Commons subservient to the repair of a dilapidated fortune."[15] He claimed therefore the promises of support which had been liberally made, and called upon the county to assert its independence. Those who were present on that day, can still remember the effect produced by his appeal; and it was replied to nobly. "It is impossible," said a gentleman, who rose as soon as he sat down, "that we can desert Mr. Wilberforce, and therefore put down my name for £500." This example spread; about £18,000 was immediately subscribed; and it was resolved that his cause was a county object, and that

[15] Annual Register.

he should not even be permitted to put down his name to the subscriptions opened to support his election.[16]

The next day he set off to spend the few days which preceded the election in a canvass of the East Riding. On reaching Hull he was met by a great body of freeholders at the hall at Sculcoates; "and when standing up to address them, it seemed," says an eyewitness,[17] "as if he was struck by the scene before him—the fields and gardens where he had played as a boy, now converted into wharfs or occupied by buildings; and pouring forth the thoughts with which the change impressed him—the gradual alteration of external objects, and the still greater alteration which had taken place in themselves—he addressed the people with the most thrilling effect."

"Gentlemen,—To a mind not utterly devoid of feeling, it must ever be peculiarly interesting to visit, after a long absence, the residence of childhood and of early youth. This is now my situation; and every object, and many of the faces I behold around me, are such as were familiar to me in my earliest years; while I am reminded of many friends and connexions, some of them near and dear to me, who are now no more. The emotions thus excited really distract my thoughts; but I can truly assure you, that whatever deficiency may be thereby occasioned in the expression of my sentiments, will be more than made up by

[16] On the motion of Spencer Stanhope Esq. seconded by Charles Duncombe Esq. now Lord Feversham, chairman of his committee. MS. Account of the election.

[17] Rev. Mr. Dykes.

those feelings of gratitude and attachment which at this moment powerfully affect my heart. I am naturally led to retrace the journey of life, until I reach the period when I first became the object of your public notice; for it was your kindness, gentlemen, which first called me into public life, and in my earliest manhood placed me in the honourable situation of your representative. While I filled that office I endeavoured to discharge its duties with industry and fidelity, and when I ceased to be your immediate representative, I did not cease to feel an interest in your welfare. With many of you, indeed, I continued still to be connected in the same relation.

"Of the manner in which I discharged my parliamentary duty, and of the principles by which it was regulated, it is not for me to speak. I may be said to have lived in public; my conduct has been open to you all, and I have the satisfaction of knowing that in general it has been honoured with your approbation. I was no party man—measures, not men, were the object of my concern. I formed early a friendly connexion with that great minister who so long presided over the counsels of this country, and our friendship was dissolved only by his death. In common with most of you I, in general, approved his measures, and had the satisfaction of finding the dictates of public duty coincide with the impulse of private friendship. But I never addicted myself to him so closely as not to consider every question and every measure with impartiality and freedom; and I supported or opposed him as my judgment and conscience

prescribed. Suffer me, gentlemen, to condole with you for a moment, on the loss of that great man, and to pay a just tribute to his memory. You know, in common with the world, the force of his talents, and the splendour of his eloquence; but they who were the companions of his private hours can alone sufficiently testify the warmth and incessant activity of his patriotism, and how, negligent only of his own personal interest, he was unceasingly anxious for the safety and prosperity of his country. Great however as was the respect and attachment I entertained for him, I yet sometimes opposed his measures, at no small cost of private feeling; while he on his part was liberal enough to give me credit for my motives, and to continue to receive me with unabated confidence and regard. It gratifies me to believe that in the main you concurred with me in the general approbation of his measures; and while it must be confessed that he lived in times of peculiar difficulty and danger, we have had the satisfaction during his administration of finding our country gradually advancing in internal prosperity. [Great emotion and applause.]

"I congratulate you on the improvement which we witness, and on the increased population and affluence I have observed in every part of our great county. In the West Riding, which I have just visited, I have been beholding the effects of manufacturing industry; here I see those of commercial enterprise; and these very fields, in which I so often walked and played in my infancy, are now filled with the habita-

tions of men. But it gratifies me both there and here to find that you are not so absorbed in the pursuit of your particular schemes, or the promotion of your personal interests, as not to be attentive also to the public welfare, and to be ready to come forth at your country's call, whatever be the service she may require of you; whether it be to defend her with your arms, or to serve her no less effectually in administering her justice. Here, gentlemen, we see the happy effects of our free constitution, which, under the blessing of Providence, has been the instrument of dispensing greater civil happiness for a longer period, and to a greater body of men, than any system of political government in any other age or quarter of the world. I am glad, gentlemen, to know that I am addressing those who, like myself, revere this excellent constitution, and assign its just nature to each of its respective parts; who know that all the three branches of it are equally necessary, and who understand that liberty and loyalty can co-exist in harmonious and happy combination. Gentlemen, so long as you thus understand the constitution under which you live, and know its nature, so long you will be safe and happy; and notwithstanding the varieties of political opinion which will ever exist in a free country, you will present a firm and united front against every foreign enemy. Great countries are perhaps never conquered solely from without, and while this spirit of patriotism and its effects continue to flourish, you may, with the favour of Providence, bid defiance to the power of the greatest of our adversaries. On

these prospects let me congratulate you; and let me assure you that if, through your kindness, and that of the other freeholders of Yorkshire, I should once more receive the honourable trust which has now been five times reposed in me, it will be my care to watch over your interests and promote your welfare."

The next day was Sunday, and he was able to "bless God that his mind was pretty free from politics." "I walked with him," says the Rev. Mr. Dykes, "for a considerable time. We called upon various friends, and I was much struck to see how totally he had dismissed from his mind all thoughts of the approaching contest. His conversation related entirely to subjects which suited the day. He was speaking particularly about the words 'being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' and seemed free from any sort of care about what was coming."

He returned to York on the day of election, (Wednesday, May 20th,) and here things assumed an unexpected aspect. The show of hands was against him; and on that day he was second, the next lowest, on the poll. This was in part owing to the want of conveyances, and to the impossibility of giving to volunteer supporters the order and arrangement of professional agents. "There was among Lord Milton's friends, and in a degree among Mr. Lascelles's, a unity, discipline, and disposition to obey orders and act from a common impulse which belong to a formed party, and are found in proportion to the degree of party spirit which prevails. We had nothing of this; but the exact opposite—a mixture in our cabinet of

a number of heterogeneous particles, and no common impulse either felt or obeyed."[18] Appearances were so unfavourable, that when his friends met at dinner after the conclusion of the poll—"I can see, gentlemen, clearly enough how this will turn out," said the barrister who had come from London as his professional adviser; "Mr. Wilberforce has obviously no chance, and the sooner he resigns the better." But if the combinations of regular discipline were more prompt in their effect, the vast muster of independent freeholders on the third day proved them to be no match for the voluntary zeal to which he trusted. "No carriages are to be procured," says a letter from Hull, "but boats are proceeding up the river heavily laden with voters: farmers lend their waggons; even donkeys have the honour of carrying voters for Wilberforce, and hundreds are proceeding on foot. This is just as it should be. No money can convey all the voters; but if their feelings are roused, his election is secure."

Now were seen the effects of his never having closed his doors against the legitimate claims of his constituents. "At that time," writes one of them,[19] "applications to county members on public topics by private individuals were rarely made, and more rarely attended to. Mr. Wilberforce's conduct in such cases is therefore the more worthy to be held in remembrance. In 1804, I had stated to him the hardship which many of the volunteers suffered from the militia ballot, and through his interest an exemption for volun-

[18] Diary. [19] Mr. Little of Patrington.

teers who were rated not above £20 yearly taxation, had been introduced into the Bill then before the House of Commons. I now had an opportunity of showing my gratitude by canvassing the country with his letter in one hand, and an address to the volunteers in the other."

A vast number of freeholders from the North Riding, headed by Sir Robert Hildyard, entered York on the morning of the third day, and would probably have divided their support between Wilberforce and Lascelles, had not the danger of their long-tried representative induced them to give him single votes. Another large body, chiefly of the middle class, from Wensley Dale, was met on their road by one of his committee—"For what parties, gentlemen, do you come?" "Wilberforce, to a man," was their leader's reply. "During the early stage of the poll, such parties arrived at York at every given hour of time, both by day and by night, by land and by water; such was the loyalty and independence of this class of the Yorkshire freeholders, and such was their determination to support their old and favourite member, who had faithfully served them and their country during three and twenty years."[20]

"My having been left behind on the poll," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce on the evening of Friday, "seemed to rouse the zeal of my friends, (I should rather say, of my fervent adherents,) they exerted themselves, and have mended my condition. You would be gratified to see the affection which is borne

[20] MS. Account, &c. p. 62.

me by many to whom I am scarcely or not at all known. Even those who do not vote for me seem to give me their esteem. I am thankful for the weather," (the preceding days had been rainy and boisterous,) "and indeed I am thankful for a quiet mind, which is placed above the storm."

The total numbers during the two remaining days of this week were,

W.	L.	M.		
2847	2698	3032	Friday, May 22nd.	Third day.
4269	3894	4158	Saturday, May 23rd.	Fourth day.

Raising him to his usual situation at the head of the poll. He now wrote as follows to Mrs. Wilberforce.

"York, Sunday night, May 24.

"I am robbed of the time I meant to spend in writing to you, at least of a great part of it; but you will be glad to hear that I have spent on the whole a very pleasant Sunday, though this evening is of necessity passed in my committee room. I have been twice at the Minster, where the sublimity of the whole scene once nearly overcame me. It is the largest and finest Gothic building probably in the world. The city is full of freeholders, who came in such numbers as to cover the whole area of the place (a very large one) where the service is performed, and every seat and pew were filled. I was exactly reminded of the great Jewish Passover in the Temple, in the reign of Josiah. It is gratifying to say that there was the utmost decency, and not the smallest noise or indecorum; no

cockades or distinctive marks. Indeed, I must say, the town is wonderfully quiet, considering it is an election time. I am now writing in a front room, and I sat in one for two hours last night, and there was not the smallest noise or disturbance; no more I declare than in any common town at ordinary times.

"How beautiful Broomfield must be at this moment! Even here the lilacs and hawthorn are in bloom in warm situations. I imagine myself roaming through the shrubbery with you and the little ones; and indeed I have joined you in spirit several times to-day, and have hoped we were applying together at the throne of grace. How merciful and gracious God is to me! Surely the universal kindness which I experience, is to be regarded as a singular instance of the goodness of the Almighty. Indeed no one has so much cause to adopt the declaration, that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days. I bless God my mind is calm and serene, and I can leave the event to Him without anxiety, desiring that in whatever state I may be placed, I may adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour, and do honour to my Christian profession. But all is uncertain, at least to any human eye. I must say Good night. May God bless you. Kiss the babes, and give friendly remembrances to all family and other friends. If it has been as hot to-day with you as with us, (the wind east, thermometer 77, in the shade, about twelve,) you must have suffered greatly. Every blessing attend you and ours in time and eternity.

Yours ever most affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Upon the following day the three parties polled respectively, W. 1641; L. 1402; M. 1037; thus increasing the interval between the first and the two other candidates. "Wilberforce," writes Mr. Thornton, ("who with Mr. Stephen and the two Grants came down to me when they heard I was in some danger,"[21]) "continues to be the winning horse. His popularity is owing chiefly to his being thought an honest man, but partly also to the admiration of his talents."[22] His opponents were not disposed to witness his success without a struggle. Every art which election tactics are supposed to justify, was freely used. "Owing to the assurances I had received of the friendly wishes of Lord Fitzwilliam, the Duke of Norfolk, and others, and the promised support of all the clothiers, and of nine-tenths or more of Lord Milton's supporters, I had given a pledge to remain neutral. This was quite wrong—I should have made a conditional engagement, and then the Miltonians would not have dared to act as they did. All possible tricks were played to deprive me of votes. First, I was safe. When the effect of this, which made me lose the votes both of Lascellites and Miltonians, was expended; then my committee would not pay the travelling expenses of any of Milton's split votes. This was defeated; though positive falsehoods told, and printed in hand-bills, to colour and sustain it. And at last the cry of my having joined Lascelles was raised. This conduct of Lord Milton's friends shameful; since, by seeing the poll books, they must have known that I was not connected with him. Then,

[21] Diary. [22] To Mrs. Henry Thornton.

'No coalition, and Milton a plumper' was mounted; and he would bring up none else. Then the mob-directing system—twenty bruisers sent for, Firby the young ruffian, Gully, and others. With all this was combined great regularity and method in arrangement, numerous agents, and constant returns, and canvassing, and even economical expenditure, so far as compatible with immense establishment."[23]

The charge of a coalition with Mr. Lascelles was that which most injured him, for he had none of the assistance which such a junction would have secured, whilst it cost him the votes of all the warm partisans of Lord Milton, and of the whole body of the clothiers. Their personal quarrel with Mr. Lascelles, publicly avowed in the Cloth Hall at Leeds, spread through the other trades, and went far to change the political relations of a vast body of freeholders. Saddleworth, which twelve years before had poured forth its "Billy men" in support of Mr. Pitt, now voted two to one in favour of Lord Milton.[24] This charge he could

[23] Diary and Con. Mem.

[24] In the clothier districts generally, different classes voted as follows:

	W.	M.	L.		W.	M.	L.
Blacksmith	62	67	65	Grocer	30	26	27
Bricklayer	86	116	108	Gentleman	340	235	394
Butcher	99	118	111	Husbandman	159	172	187
Collier	12	27	13	Maltster	57	66	66
Clerk	130	33	155	Merchant	131	43	149
Clothier	331	1081	273	Schoolmaster	28	24	34
Cloth dresser	43	61	39	Shoemaker	93	129	97
Cotton spinner	75	79	70	Stuffmaker	15	20	12
Dissenting Minister	1	23	0	Tanner	39	35	39
Dyer	37	38	39	Weaver	111	119	113
Druggist	3	5	4	Woolcomber	83	110	70
Farmer	1017	812	1192	Yeoman	312	403	383

have refuted if he had been heard, but the main object of the "mob-directing" gang was to make this impossible. After the first few days it was only by great skill in managing a most unruly audience, that he could ever gain a hearing. "While Wilberforce was speaking the other day," writes Mr. Thornton, "the mob of Milton interrupted him: he was attempting to explain a point which had been misrepresented; he endeavoured to be heard again and again, but the cry against him always revived. 'Print, print,' cried a friend of Wilberforce in the crowd, 'print what you have to say in a hand-bill, and let them read it, since they will not hear you.' 'They read indeed,' cried Wilberforce; 'what, do you suppose that men who make such a noise as those fellows can read?' holding up both his hands; 'no men that make such noises as those can read, I'll promise you. They must hear me now, or they'll know nothing about the matter.' Immediately there was a fine Yorkshire grin over some thousand friendly faces."

The poll was kept open for fifteen days, and until the twelfth he was daily in the full turmoil of this noisy scene. "Breakfasted daily at the tavern—cold

Exclusive of the two chief clothier districts, and of the wapontake of Tickhill, (from Sheffield to Doncaster,) in which Lord Milton had a vast preponderance, the votes of the remaining nine wapontakes were as follows:—

W.	M.	L.
9410	6320	8856

The standard of the clothiers was an old leather apron, the sign of their craft; and if one of their body appeared on the other side, they would shake it in his face, "What thee vote against t'apron!"

meat at two—addressed the people at half-past five or six—at half-past six dined, forty or fifty, and sat with them. Latterly the people would not hear me, and shameful treatment. On Sundays allowed to be very quiet, to dine alone, and go twice to church."[25] His temper of mind in the midst of this confusion was such as is rarely preserved in the rude shock of such a contest. "It was necessary," says Mr. Russel, one of his most active and friendly agents, "that I should have some private communication with him every day. I usually put myself in his way therefore when he came in from the hustings to dress for dinner. On each day as he entered I perceived that he was repeating to himself what seemed the same words: at length I was able to catch them, and they proved to be that stanza of Cowper's—

> 'The calm retreat, the silent shade,
> With prayer and praise agree,
> And seem by Thy sweet bounty made
> For those that follow Thee.'"

Upon the twelfth day of the contest his active labours were suspended by a violent attack of epidemic disorder, which confined him to his room during the four days it still lasted. But though to all the other rumours, that of his being dead was added, his victory was now secure. From the third day he continued to head the poll, and the final numbers as declared by the High Sheriff were, for Wilberforce, 11,806, Milton, 11,177, Lascelles, 10,989.

[25] Diary.

TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

"York, June 8, 1807.

"My dear Friend,

I almost feel criminal for having sent you no tidings during our long and laborious contest. For the last four days I kept my room; having at last only fallen ill under a complaint which had pulled down many strong men around me many days before. Had I not been defrauded of promised votes, I should have had 20,000. However it is unspeakable cause for thankfulness to come out of the battle ruined neither in health, character, or fortune. The post is going off.

Ever affectionately, with kind remembrances,

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE."

"It is a grand contest," wrote Mr. Thornton from York, "and fills one with great ideas." It was a great victory, and strikingly refutes the favourite argument of those who maintain stoutly the necessity of party connexion for political efficiency. "No man," they allege,[26] "in this country ever obtained any great personal power and influence in society, merely by originating in parliament measures of internal regulation, or conducting with judgment and success improvements however extensive, that do not affect the interests of one or other of the two great parties in the state. Mr. Wilberforce may perhaps be mentioned as an exception; and certainly the greatness,

[26] Vid. Edinburgh Review, for Sept. 1818.

the long endurance, and the difficulty of the struggle, which he at last conducted to so glorious a termination, have given him a fame and popularity which may be compared in some respects with that of a party leader. But even Mr. Wilberforce would be at once demolished in a contest with the leaders of party."

Yet in this great contest the independent candidate triumphantly succeeded. "It gives me pleasure as an Englishman," writes Lord St. Helen's,[97] "that in a county which from its size and population has been justly styled an epitome of the kingdom at large, the claims of sheer personal worth and services have obtained so decided a preference over those of title and wealth, even when accompanied by no ordinary recommendations of a higher and better sort." Every nerve had been strained by the two great parties which were opposed to him. "Nothing since the days of the revolution," says the York Herald, "has ever presented to the world such a scene as this great county for fifteen days and nights. Repose or rest have been unknown in it, except it was seen in a messenger asleep upon his post-horse, or in his carriage. Every day the roads in every direction to and from every remote corner of the county have been covered with vehicles loaded with voters; and barouches, curricles, gigs, flying waggons, and military cars with eight horses, crowded sometimes with forty voters, have been scouring the country, leaving not the slightest chance for the quiet traveller to urge

[97] Lord St. Helen's to W. Wilberforce Esq

his humble journey, or find a chair at an inn to sit down upon."

The mode in which the expenses of his contest were defrayed was not less remarkable than the fact of his success. When it had lasted little more than a week, £64,455 had been subscribed; and much of it from places with which he had neither political nor personal connexion. Contributions poured in unasked from London, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Colchester, Leicester, and many other towns. "My exertions," wrote the Rev. Thomas Robinson of Leicester, "for you in the last election proceeded not from the partiality of friendship, but from a strong sense of duty. With contested elections in this place I never interfere; but yours was an excepted case; and from your parliamentary conduct you had an irresistible claim for support, not only upon the county of York, but upon the kingdom at large." "Here are the first characters of whom the metropolis of the world can boast," said one of the West Riding addresses, "stepping forward not merely with their good wishes, but with their purses and their hearts opened. For a long series of years they have witnessed the parliamentary career of our invaluable friend—his manly eloquence, his astonishing activity, his undaunted perseverance, his unexampled disinterestedness—and shall Yorkshiremen maintain a cold indifference towards him?" The answer of his own county to this appeal was one gratifying feature in his triumph. So great were the numbers who insisted upon coming at their own charges, that whilst the joint expenses

of his two opponents amounted to £200,000, the whole charge of bringing to the poll his great majority was but £28,600. Forty-six per cent. was returned upon the Yorkshire subscriptions. Those of the south consisted of two sums of £10,500; one provisional, which was returned entire; the other absolute, of which one-half only was employed. "Never," says Mr. Wilberforce,[28] "shall I forget the spontaneous zeal with which numbers of all ranks came forward, subjecting themselves often to great trouble and fatigue, coming from considerable distances at their own expense, with other gratifying marks of attachment and esteem."

Some of these instances are worth recording. A freeholder presented himself to vote, whose appearance seemed to imply that the cost of his journey must be an inconvenient burden to him. The committee therefore proposed to him that they should defray his expenses. This he instantly declined. When however it appeared that he was a clergyman of very small means, who had travelled (and often on foot) from the farthest corner of the county, they renewed the same suggestion; and named a certain sum, which they pressed him to accept. "Well, gentlemen," he said at last, "I will accept your offer, and I request you to add that sum in my name to the subscription for Mr. Wilberforce's expenses."

"How did you come up?" they asked an honest countryman from the neighbourhood of Rotherham, who had given Mr. Wilberforce a plumper, and denied

[28] Mr. Wilberforce's Letter to the Freeholders.

having spent any thing on his journey. "Sure enow I cam all'd-way ahint Lord Milton's carriage."

"Perhaps it may be thought," says Mr. Wilberforce in the Letter which after the election he addressed to the freeholders, "that we too much neglected pride, and pomp, and circumstance; the procession, and the music, and the streamers, and all the other purchased decorations which catch the vulgar eye. That our more sober system was recommended to me by economical motives, I will not deny. This economy may perhaps by some be thought to be carried too far; yet when it is recollected that it was not my money, but that of my kind and public-spirited supporters, which was expended, no liberal mind will wonder at my having earnestly wished to be parsimonious. But shall I confess for my friends as well as for myself, that we acted from the impulse of our taste, no less than from that of our judgment, when we declined all competition in parade and profusion? Our triumph was of a different sort. We may perhaps have too much indulged our love of simplicity; but to our eyes and feelings, the entrance of a set of common freeholders on their own, and those often not the best, horses, or riding in their carts and waggons, often equipped in a style of rustic plainness, was far more gratifying, than the best arranged and most pompous cavalcade."

This Letter, in which he answered the charge of a secret coalition with his former colleague, was a concession to the opinion of his friends. His ordinary rule was to reply to no such attacks. "Stephen told

me," he says, on one of these occasions, "of the charge brought against me of lying to the York corporation, when I got the living for Overton" [a newspaper slander, which was not only untrue, but without foundation in truth]. "I determined on letting it sleep, only authorizing denial. One must live down such charges." At another time he writes, "These calumnies and misconceptions will gradually die away, overborne by the general course and conduct of my life, both previous and subsequent; just as the natural vegetation of the soil by degrees obliterates all traces of the at first unsightly spot from which weeds or thistles have been extirpated." But in this case he was persuaded to reply. "You and the county," urged Mr. Thornton, "must go together to the end of your life, but remember, that though Yorkshire knows what was done, the rest of England knows nothing about it." His Letter is an admirable specimen of perfect self-defence without recrimination. It absolutely annihilated the slander against which it was directed, except with those who, as Dr. Coulthurst says, "would continue to believe it though you should bray them in a mortar."

CHAPTER XXII.

JUNE 1807 TO DECEMBER 1808.

His feelings on reviewing his success—Session concluded—Brighton—Attack on Copenhagen—Return to Broomfield—John Bowdler—Illness—New session—African Institution anniversary—Roman Catholic question—Attack on Missions—Bishop Porteus—Spanish patriots—East-Bourne—Letters of friendship—Enforcement of Abolition—Review of Fox's History—Settlement at Kensington Gore.

THREE months had witnessed those two great triumphs, the Abolition of the Slave Trade and the Yorkshire election; and unnumbered congratulations poured in upon the chief actor in them. At the close of a letter of this stamp, Hayley subscribes himself "Tanto homini servus, tantæ virtutis amator;" and adds apologetically, "Please to remember, that to praise excellence is the privilege of angels and poets." It is interesting to trace the secret safe-guards which kept his simplicity of mind untainted amidst such success and flattery. "Surely," are his private reflections, "it calls for deep humiliation, and warm acknowledgment, that God has given me favour with men, that after guiding me by His providence to that great cause, He crowned my efforts with success, and obtained for me so much good-will and credit. Alas,

Thou knowest, Lord, all my failings, errors, infirmities, and negligences in relation to this great cause; but Thou art all goodness and forbearance towards me. If I do not feel grateful to Thee, oh how guilty must I be brought in by my own judgment! But, O Lord, I have found too fatally my own stupidity; do Thou take charge of me, and tune my heart to sing Thy praises, and make me wholly Thine." "When I look back on my parliamentary life, and see how little, all taken together, I have duly adorned the doctrine of God my Saviour, I am ashamed and humbled in the dust; may any time which remains, Lord, be better employed. Meanwhile I come to the cross with all my sins, negligences, and ignorances, and cast myself on the free mercy of God in Christ as my only hope and refuge. Lord, receive and pardon me, and give me Thy renewing grace. Oh how inexpressibly valuable are the promises of Holy Scripture! Thy ways, O Lord, are not as our ways; Thou art infinite in love, as in wisdom, and in power. O may I never forsake Thee; guide me, guard me, purify me, strengthen me, keep me from falling, and at length present me faultless before the presence of Thy glory with exceeding joy.

"There is something so stupendously great in the salvation of God, that when we are enabled to have some realizing sense of it, one is ready to cry out, 'Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me;' surely I am utterly unworthy of all Thy goodness and love. So thou art, but Christ is worthy; and He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. And all

the company of the redeemed, with the holy angels, and surely with myriads of myriads of beings, according to their several ranks, and orders, and faculties, and powers, shall join in adoring the infinite love of the Redeemer, and shall make up the chorus of that heavenly song, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honour, and glory, and blessing,' &c. Oh may I bear a part in that bright and glad assemblage! Who will, who among them all can, have more cause than myself for gratitude and love? Meanwhile may I prove my gratitude on earth, by giving up myself to Thy service, and living universally to Thy glory. O Lord, enable me to be thus wholly Thine."

"O Lord, I humbly hope that it is Thou who knockest at the door of my heart, who callest forth these more than usually lively emotions of contrition, desire, faith, trust, and gratitude. Oh may I hear His voice, and open the door and let Him in, and be admitted to intercourse and fellowship; may I be really a thriving Christian, bringing forth abundantly the fruits of the Spirit to the glory of God. O Lord, I am lost in astonishment at Thy mercy and love. That Thou shouldst not only quit the glory and happiness of heaven to be made man, and bear the most excruciating torments and bitter degradation for our deliverance and salvation; but that Thou still bearest with us, though we, knowing all Thy goodness, are still cold and insensible to it. That Thou strivest with our perverseness, conquerest our opposition, and still waitest to be gracious; and that it was in the fore-knowledge of this our base ingratitude and stupid perverse-

ness, that Thou didst perform these miracles of mercy. That Thou knewest me, and my hardness, and coldness, and unworthy return for all Thy goodness, when Thou calledst me from the giddy throng, and shone into my heart with the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. O well may we exclaim, 'Thy ways are not as our ways, nor Thy thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Thy ways higher than our ways, and Thy thoughts than our thoughts.' O Lord, I cast myself before Thee, O spurn me not from Thee; unworthy, though I am, of all Thy wonderful goodness. . . O grant me more and more of humility, and love, and faith, and hope, and longing for a complete renewal into Thine image. Lord, help me and hear me. I come to Thee as my only Saviour. O be Thou my help, my strength, my peace, and joy, and consolation; my Alpha and Omega; my all in all. Amen."

"I have far too little thought of the dangers of great wealth, or rather of such affluence and rank in life as mine. O my soul, bethink thee of it; and at the same time bless God who has given thee some little knowledge of the way of salvation. How little also have I borne in mind that we are to be pilgrims and strangers on the earth! This impression can be kept up in those who are in such a state of prosperity and comfort as myself, by much prayer and meditation, and by striving habitually to walk by faith and to have my conversation in heaven." "O Lord, direct me to some new line of usefulness, for Thy glory, and the good of

my fellow-creatures. I have been thinking of lessening the number of oaths." [1]

The new parliament met upon the 22nd of June; and he was soon engaged in close attendance on it, being "chiefly in Palace Yard, having fewer motives to draw me to Broomfield, my family being now at Brighton, and much parliamentary business." This continued till the second week in August. Upon the 3rd he was in the House when "Whitbread's Bill was discussed, and took a warm part for it." [2] Upon the 13th, when the Houses were prorogued, he thus reviews the session. "Canning has done most ably this session. Perceval ill, and below himself; owing we suppose to his wife's illness fagging him, and keeping him up at night. M. spoke again; but though very cleverly and bitterly, according to his own theory, yet I think there is a want of pathos which will prevent his ever hurrying others along; or rising to the first, or even to the top of the second rank. I never can be sufficiently grateful to my friends, both in Cambridge, London, and many other places, for the kindness with which they contributed and exerted themselves in my support. At Reading, Maidenhead, and other places thereabouts; in Birmingham, Bristol, Newport Pagnell, Woburn, Worcester, Colchester, &c. subscriptions were made. My Hull friends were excessively active and kind."

He had not hitherto been able to acknowledge all this friendly zeal, but at Brighton, where, as

[1] Journal. [2] Diary.

soon as the recess began, he joined his family, he set at once about the task, and found his "time completely engrossed in writing letters, being engaged in it for five or six solid hours daily."[3] "I have only lately called for the book which contains the names of those kind friends, who, in what appeared the most critical emergency, stepped forth to my aid in my late Yorkshire contest; for I am now enjoying my first season of leisure since the election."[4] "When I look back on the last few months, in the comparative sequestration of this place, I become more and more deeply impressed with a sense of their kindness. You will not conceive that I am less grateful to them because I trace it to a still higher source, and look with humble and I hope thankful wonder at the Divine goodness, which so influenced in my favour the affections of men."[5]

Here he was "much amused by London in lustring—yet a fine pure air, clear sea, and good houses.[6] 19th. The weather delightful—still busy on letters—Venn next door—some discussions about education, &c.—Lord and Lady Bathurst here. 20th and 22nd. Dined Bathurst's—Lord and Lady H. there. What unfavourable circumstances great people are under! 24th. Allotted time to serious reflection—awful suspense whilst doubting what we shall hear from Admiral Gambier."[7] On the day following the capitulation the Admiral wrote to him.

[3] Diary, Aug. 21. [4] To Rev. Charles Simeon, Sept. 14.
[5] To W. Hey Esq. Aug. 15. [6] Diary, Aug. 18. [7] Diary.

"Prince of Wales, off Copenhagen, Sept. 8, 1807.

"My dear Friend,

I am sure you will be happy to hear that it has pleased God to bless our endeavours here for the service of the nation, and that we are in possession of the whole Danish navy at Copenhagen, consisting of eighteen sail of the line, eleven frigates, and eleven sloops, with a number of gun-boats, &c.

"Providence has favoured us in a most remarkable manner from the moment of our departure from England, every circumstance concurring to our help. Most thankful ought we to be for so favourable an issue in the attainment of an object of such importance, with a comparatively trifling loss. The poor Danes have suffered very much, and great distress must be felt by the inhabitants of Copenhagen. Having much upon my hands, I can only desire you will offer my affectionate remembrances to Mrs. Wilberforce.

Yours ever most truly,

J. GAMBIER."

"How shocking," were his own reflections,[8] "are the accounts from Copenhagen! Alas, alas! I cannot but greatly doubt the policy of changing so great a number of men from cold into most willing and energetic allies of France. They must think us the most unjust and cruel of bullying despots. There is, however, the consolation of believing that our government really conceived themselves to be acting justly."

[8] Diary, Sept. 19.

"My friends doubt about the Danish business—I own the policy doubtful; but our right clear, if self-defence clear. They would have become our open enemies very shortly. Still our national character injured. Oh that nations trusted more to God! and then if we had on Christian principles forborne, declaring we would not expose our good to be evil spoken of, I doubt not we should have been protected."[9] "I cannot but doubt of our acting properly in applying to our own use all the Danish property."[10]

TO WILLIAM HEY ESQ.

"Near London, Nov. 27, 1807.

"My dear Sir,

I have been deeply impressed by accounts I have received of the sufferings of the inhabitants both of Copenhagen and Buenos Ayres. I wish you had hinted to me your opinion of the former measure. Religious people, in general, I understand, condemn it strongly as utterly unjust and indefensible. For my own part, after much (I trust impartial) reflection, I am convinced that under all the circumstances of the case, the Danish expedition was just. But it has grieved me exceedingly to hear lately, that our government intend to confiscate for our own benefit all the ships and stores which have been brought away. Surely it would be both right and politic to confine ourselves within the strictest limits which are compatible with our essential safety. It was absolutely essential to deprive the Danes of a fleet, which,

[9] Diary, Oct. 20. [10] Ib. Nov. 14.

combined with that of Russia, would otherwise have soon conveyed a French army to Ireland or Scotland, or have forced us to detach to the north so large a proportion of our naval strength, as would have left us open to attack in the south and west of the two islands. But it cannot be absolutely necessary to appropriate to our own use the value of our seizure; and our so doing will tend to bring into doubt our motives in undertaking the expedition, and thereby injure our national character.

"I would not, however, exercise at the expense of our sailors and soldiers the generosity for which I contend. They should have the usual reward, but it should be paid by ourselves, not out of the proceeds of the Danish seizures. Believe me, my dear sir, to be

affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"Though," as he told a friend,[11] "he scarcely ever in his life had found it so difficult to keep" his "abstract reasonings on the case from being trampled under-foot by the host of feelings which the general view of the whole scene called into action;" yet he was firmly convinced of the soundness of these principles. He took great pains in making up his mind; talking the matter over at length "with Lord Sidmouth, who" was "most decided against the expedition, and clear that the Danish army was in Holstein for the purpose of resisting the French;" and with "Gambier, who was quite satisfied of the

[11] Letter to S. Shore Esq.

rectitude and extreme utility of the Danish expedition; speaking in high terms of the Divine goodness, and of the protection of Providence." [12] His final judgment on the question is expressed in a marginal note, to a strong condemnation of the plan which appeared in the Edinburgh Annual Register. "The true answer to this—We sent against Copenhagen a force so great, as reasonably to induce us to hope that the Danish fleet would be surrendered without bloodshed, because there could be no disgrace in yielding without a struggle. But government did wrong in using the fleet we took. We should have kept it as a sacred deposit, to be restored on the termination of the war." "I own to you however," he tells Mr. Babington, "that I doubt if I should have dared to advise the expedition, if I had been in the Cabinet; and I have not seen any where a justification of the measure, which is to me at all satisfactory, or which takes the ground or states the principles on which alone I have rested its defence."

But while he defended the expedition, he was ready to "weep with those that weep;" and as shortly after he would not consent "to deprive our most inveterate enemies of those common alleviations which God's providence allows to our suffering nature;" [13] so here he rejoiced that "the chief injury to Copenhagen was not sustained by the bombs, which would have been murderous instruments, but by the

[12] Diary, Nov. 19.

[13] Mr. Wilberforce's speech, Feb. 4, 1808, on the admission of Jesuits' bark into France.

rockets, which set the houses on fire without injuring the inhabitants;" and he forthwith proposed "a subscription for assisting the poorer of the individual sufferers to rebuild their houses." It is delightful to see the rugged countenance of necessary war thus brightened by acts of Christian charity, which, by their healing influence, repress the brutalizing effects of conflict, blessing equally the giver and receiver. Much of his time, it will be seen, in the following busy spring was spent in like exertions for the colonies of Denmark.

The remainder of this autumn was spent at Broomfield. Here he was within reach of much valuable society. "Oct. 26th. Evening, John Bowdler came, a truly amiable and most able young man, and above all, truly pious, and charmingly pleasant. Sat chatting with him too long. Much talk about education. He agreed that public school inadmissible, from its probable effects on eternal state. He staid with me till Thursday, and Mr. Henry Thornton met him, and we had much talk—a truly pleasing and excellent man. Nov. 12th. Dinner home—Grant's two sons, and Bowdler, and C. Noel—very pleasant, rational, conversable evening." At Broomfield too he was ready to bring his influence to bear on passing matters. "To African Institution meeting, and back to dinner. To town about Sierra Leone business, saw Admiralty Barrow. To Perceval's, and chatted with him, chiefly tête-à-tête, two hours; talked with him freely on 'sume superbiam,' &c. Called public offices about Count Zenobio. To town to see Canning and Perceval—

interview with them about Africa and New South Wales, and Lubeck sequestration. Morning, to town —and Canning—about Portugal and America. (Bissao Slave Trade, and Mr. Graham about religious instruction of convicts.)" Here he broke one of his own rules, "never to mention more than one subject to official men at one interview, for if I do I find that all are overlooked." He was more successful with Mr. Canning, who wrote him word—

"Foreign Office, Oct. 26, 1807.

"Dear Wilberforce,

I have broken ground about Bissao; and do not despair, if things should take a favourable turn, of being able to obtain—not the cession of the settlement, (for there is I find other trade of value attached to it,) but an abandonment of the Slave Trade at the place—for a valuable consideration you must understand. What will you offer?

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE CANNING."

But these opportunities of service were purchased at an expense of time which he was constantly regretting. Not that his study was wholly deserted, for he mentions "reading poetry in the evening;" and at other times, "Paley's Natural Theology, Adam Smith, popular pamphlets, Bosanquet's Value of Commerce—clever, but rash, and in parts unfair, but not designedly; a man should always have a friend to run over his writings—Cobbett too, and Edinburgh

Review, and Eclectic; Mrs. Hutchinson's Memoirs of Col. H.—beautiful; Spence Against Foreign Commerce—sad stuff, a vile mingle-mangle of blundering conclusions from Adam Smith, Economists, &c.; Lowe on State of West Indies—oil without vinegar; Concessions to America the Bane of Great Britain; Excellent critique on Malthus, in Christian Observer, which Bowdler's I am sure; Lay of Last Minstrel. A little poetry sometimes walking out, but almost always I read out of doors. Looking over East India documents for civilizing and converting natives, Buchanan's Ecclesiastical Establishment, and Wrangham's Civilization of Hindoos."

TO THE REV. FRANCIS WRANGHAM.

"Near London, Nov. 23, 1807.

"My dear Sir,

I must either delay writing to you for some period of leisure, (and when may that arrive?) or suppress much which the perusal of your rich and interesting sermon would otherwise call forth. To me it is doubly interesting, from the deep interest I have long taken in the fate of our oriental fellow-subjects. You may probably have heard, that the late melancholy tragedy at Vellore, has furnished to the adversaries of Christianity an occasion for endeavouring to obstruct the efforts which were using for its diffusion. Our past crimes, according to the ordinary dispensations of Providence, are now in the way of natural consequences producing our punishment. The servants of the East

India Company, who through the scandalous neglect of ——, (I will not fix the charge,) lived among pagans for many years, without the opportunity of attending public worship, or any other ordinances of religion or means of grace, being now come home with large fortunes, and numerous connexions, and considerable influence, manifest their heathenish principles by openly espousing the cause of the Vedas against the Scriptures, and the Hindoos against the Christian faith. How far this is gone you will judge, when I tell you that a quondam servant of the Company has been lately publishing a pamphlet in the shape of a letter to the chairman, of which it is the direct object to reprobate the translation or circulation of the Holy Scriptures in Indostan; and so confident was the author in the rectitude and wisdom of his own opinions, that he called on the chairman one morning to express his surprise that the Court of Directors had not publicly declared their determination to suppress so pernicious a practice. But I grieve to hint to you, (this however in confidence,) that I have some reason to fear, lest the idea of its being both equitable and politic to leave our East Indian subjects in their present deplorable state, may have found a place in the minds of some of a very high description, even of your profession.

"I trouble you with all this detail for the purpose of pressing on you the duty of endeavouring by all possible means to counteract these monstrous errors. To me, I frankly declare that our suffering our East India subjects, nay *tenants*, for such they are, to remain, without an effort to the

contrary, under the most depraving and cruel system of superstition which ever enslaved a people, is, considering all our own blessings, and, which you truly urge, the safety and excellent policy of the attempt if judiciously and temperately made, the greatest by far, now that the Slave Trade has ceased, of all the national crimes by which we are provoking the vengeance and suffering the chastisement of Heaven. We are the more criminal, because there is not a pretence for connecting the Vellore transaction with the Missionary labours. On the contrary, wherever they have taught, the good has been unmixed with, uncompensated by, evil. May I hint that you would probably render a public service by informing the mind of my colleague on the whole of this subject. But I hope you will not confine yourself within such a narrow limit, but will continue to work in the field in which you have already laboured so successfully.

"Before I conclude, allow me to ask whether Tennant's Works, from which you sometimes quote, contain much that is useful to one who should read with a religious and moral eye. I think I see you intimate a predilection, in which I fully share with you, as I have often told my friend Mr. Grant, for Lord Wellesley's East India college. I own, considering the immense revenues of our East Indian empire, I would have economized any where rather than there. The institution surely will not answer the same ends, if it be continued on a contracted scale. It must be elevated high, it must be rendered brilliant and dazzling, to attract the notice of surrounding nations,

and attract their various literati. I greatly deplore its having been so shorn of its beams, and wish it restored to its primeval splendour. But I must break off, being extremely pressed for time, and compelled to employ myself on less interesting topics. Excuse my hasty scrawl, and believe me, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. Are the Lettres Edifiantes interesting? I do not possess, and indeed never saw, them."

Amidst these employments he complains grievously that his "days pass without finding time for any vested labour. I long to be able to write something new of a religious kind, as it really would be read;" and "the experience of these few months taught" him "that" he "must spend his autumn till parliament meets in some quieter place, where I may see more of my family, and myself study more, and think more. My incessant visitors and visitees while here compel me to write my letters in the morning, and that breaks in upon and consumes all my time."

The following note to Mr. Stephen, with a letter to Mr. Simeon written soon after the birth of his youngest child, give a lively picture of these interrupted days.

"Broomfield, *inter shavendum*, Thursday.

"My dear Stephen,

I think you had better send Lord C. your intelligence concerning the slaves. His *nick-name* is

Viscount C. I wish to have a quiet day with you here, though I am sorry to say, that as yet I am in as much bustle as during the sitting of parliament.

"If Rachel be as good in Theology as in beef-steaking, she is high indeed.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

TO THE REV. CHARLES SIMEON.

"Sept. 24, 1807.

"My dear Friend,

I can say but three words, but I know you will think they are words of joy, and which call for thankfulness. Mrs. W. has brought me another boy, and both mother and child are as well as possible. Praise God with me. I have been continually interrupted all this morning: it is now dinner time, and I have a single gentleman already arrived. One set of morning visitors has been a party of Swedes, two of them noble, who have been recommended to me; and as they are going to Cambridge, and wish for letters of introduction, I name them to you.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. These same Swedes, two at least, are great men in their own country."

This busy life was broken in upon in the middle of December, by a sudden attack of dangerous illness. "Dec. 20th. A good deal of pain in my side, and my

breath much affected. 22nd. Pitcairne called and bled me—thought the complaint very serious—inflammation on the lungs—the last I should have feared. How are we reminded of our continual dependence upon God! 23rd. Better, I thank God, but still in a ticklish state. 25th. Surprisingly recovered, I thank God." This amendment continued without any check; and upon the first day of the new year, he acknowledges "the great mercies I have received of the Lord. How good has God been to me in recovering me so rapidly from a very dangerous disease, and during the course of it, preserving me from any great suffering, and giving me every possible help and comfort! My dear kind friend the Dean[14] came up to us. My servant very obliging. Pitcairne very kind and attentive, and my dearest wife all tenderness and assiduity. I was taken ill on the 18th of December, and though not yet down-stairs, I am almost myself again. O Lord, bless to me this dispensation! Cause me to live in a more practical sense of the shortness and uncertainty of all human things; and oh bring my soul, more effectually than ever hitherto, to God in Christ, and give me a large measure of Thy Spirit. May I be enabled to live by faith above the world, looking for a better country, with my heart supremely set on it. O Lord, I know too well my own weakness, but Thou canst strengthen the weakest, and hast promised that Thou wilt, if we earnestly pray to Thee. Lord, be with me, and strengthen me. Enable me to maintain a closer walk with Thee; and while I

[14] Milner.

live a life of faith and hope, having my affections set on things above, may I discharge the duties of my station, so as to let my light shine before men, and adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. Amen, and Amen."

Amongst the memoranda of a day "set apart" shortly afterwards,[15] the meeting of parliament being at hand, "for prayer and meditation, and other religious exercises, with moderation in food," after acknowledging "God's mercy in his late recovery from sickness," he prays "above all for the love of God and my Redeemer, that this blessed principle may be like the main-spring of the machine, prompting all the movements, and diffusing its practical influence through every disposition, action, plan, and design. And (if it be consistent with the Divine will) for a more assured hope of the favour of God and Christ. May the God of hope fill me with all joy and peace in believing. O Lord, do Thou break, soften, quicken, warm my cold heart; and teach me to feel an overflowing love and gratitude, or rather a deep and grateful sense of obligation, not as a transient effusion, but as the settled temper and disposition, the practical habit of my soul: that so I may here begin the song of praise, to be sung with more purified and warmed affections in heaven, Worthy is the Lamb; and blessing, honour, glory, and power, &c."[16]

His Journals and correspondence will describe, almost without addition, his return to ordinary occu-

[15] Jan. 16. [16] Journal.

pations, and the full wave of business which soon overtook him. "Pray do not go," was Hannah More's New-year's greeting, "to that death-doing House of Commons too soon. Remember the wise precept, 'Reculer pour meux sauter;' a precept I suppose taken from boys playing at hop, step, and jump. I was happy that your incomparable Dean was with you. God Almighty bless you."

"The Dean is most urgent in his injunctions of care lest a relapse—a second attack might be fatal. In what a state are public affairs! Portuguese court migrated to Brazils—pregnant with important consequences—especially in Abolition connexion. Russian war. Our decree concerning neutral trade—I fear it will produce American war. Buonaparte now busy in Italy—it is supposed planning partition of Turkey. This man is manifestly an instrument in the hands of Providence; when God has done with him, He will probably show how easily He can get rid of him. Meanwhile may we be of the number of those who trust in Him, and all will be well. Lord, prepare and fit me for discharging the duties of my station, in a manner honourable to my Christian profession, and useful to my fellow-creatures. I am gradually regaining strength. Reading Ingram's pamphlet on Causes of Increase of Methodism. Able, written in an excellent spirit, and much most useful matter, and many excellent practical suggestions, and most candid suggestions; but from its defects it is evident that all his efforts would be labouring in the fire. Reading also papers on Neutral Question, and Orders in Council as respecting America; and West Indian Report on

State of Islands. Cowper's Letters—what a happy art both of conceiving and expressing he possesses! Also refreshing memory on historical events of last few years. O Lord, teach me to see Thy hand in all things, and to refer all to Thee, bearing in mind continually Thy overruling providence, and casting all my care on Thee. Buonaparte's violent and most impudent decree; passing by all he had ordered and done, and treating our retaliating Order in Council as if it was an original act. Oh the corrupted currents of this world! Well! 'the Lord reigneth,' and it shall be well with those that fear Him.[17] 9th. Reading Stephen's papers on American war; running over Franklin's Life. Stephen again offered a seat in parliament by Perceval in the most handsome way. I am on the whole for his accepting it. It comes to him a second time; not of his seeking. He agrees with Perceval passim, and with the government as to their grand scheme of policy—Order in Council; indeed it is his measure. If there should be any reason for his giving up his seat, Perceval and he would not misunderstand each other. He truly conscientious about it. Reading pamphlets about East Indian Missions." On this subject he enters in the following letter.

TO W. HEY ESQ.

"Near London, Feb. 5, 1808.

* * * * * * * *

"You must have collected from the pamphlets that have been advertised, that the subject of East Indian

[17] Diary.

missions has been interesting the public mind; but possibly you may not have heard how active and earnest 'the enemy' has been (in writing to you I may call things by their true names) in stirring up opposition to any endeavours for diffusing Christian instruction throughout our East Indian empire. A motion has been made in the Court of Directors by one of the most able, experienced, wealthy, and well-connected members of their body; the effect of which would have been to bring home all the missionaries, to recall Buchanan by name as a culprit, and to prohibit the circulation or even translation of the Scriptures. The Court seemed in general but too well-disposed to such proceedings, but the most strenuous efforts were made by Mr. Grant and Mr. Parry, Lord Teignmouth and others, and happily the first attempt was defeated by a considerable majority; and we hope that, though it is dreadful to think what is the general opinion and feeling of the bulk of the higher orders on this whole subject, we shall be able to resist all the endeavours that are used to bar out the light of truth from those our benighted fellow-subjects. Mr. Perceval has stood our friend.——Buonaparte, by all accounts, is preparing on a great scale for an expedition to the East; and should this country use the powers of its government for the avowed purpose of shutting the Scriptures out of our Indian empire, how could we hope that God would not employ his French army in breaking down the barriers we had vainly and wickedly been rearing, and thus open a passage by which Christian light might shine upon that darkened land. The

Dean's warnings have kept me out of town hitherto, but on Monday next I hope to return to London, and to attend parliament. Farewell, my dear sir.

I am yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He now resumed his attendance at the "House almost every night," where he complains of the "debates" as "poor compared with former times; yet Perceval improved, and Canning extremely clever."

The House was now engaged in warm and repeated debates on the Order in Council, and he was "much perplexed about it. H. Thornton against, Stephen most strong for it; Perceval not very strong; Canning evidently disliking it." The working too of the Abolition Bill called for his continual watchfulness. "You have crossed the Red sea," was the timely caution which his friend Dr. Burgh mingled with his congratulations,[18] "but Pharaoh may follow your steps, and aim at some abridgement of the deliverance; keep then prepared to craze his chariot wheels, and disappoint every effort of men who have not only opposed you, but mingled their opposition with predictions of what smugglers and other nations may do, and even with threats of repeal at home." To maintain this guard the African Institution had been founded; and under the presidency of the "Duke of Gloucester, Lords Grenville and Howick and Mr. Perceval consented to join it." It was of great moment to keep up the spirit of this body; and the 25th of March, the day on

[16] March 28 1807.

which the Abolition Bill had received the royal assent, was fixed for its first anniversary. It was "a magnificent day, between five and six hundred people, ten or twelve noblemen, and forty or more M. P.s—Duke of Gloucester in the chair. We were afraid beforehand, and doubted about putting it off."

He was now again in the full stream of business. "Much worried, many committees. East Indian—lottery—woollen committees. Friends at dinner before House. Letters."[19] "From the 4th of April till the 9th in town. Debate about Reversion Bill, and I spoke with more freedom than usual. Sad artificial work! Tierney made most play. Robert Dundas unaffected and pleasing. 11th. To town, Proclamation Society about Smithfield market. 14th. Heard that Danish Davis's Strait[20] settlers had not been attended to, and talked with Pole and Gambier about them. Was to dine at Broomfield, but stopped in town, and drove to Shadwell dock, Col. Mellish, about them. "For a month he steadily renewed these applications, and at last succeeded in procuring the despatch of vessels on this work of mercy. Upon the 29th, came on the "Maynooth college debate—no preference of protestantism over popery hinted; and yet with what concern did I hear to-night that Dr. Duigenan made a Privy Councillor. Opposition contended for completing the college so as to supply all the Roman Catholic priests wanted. Perceval for 250, (vice

[19] Diary, April 2.

[20] They consisted principally of Greenlanders under the charge of the Moravian brethren, and depended for sustenance on supplies from Europe.

400,) for which the building already completed." Upon the 5th of May the "House" was "again on Maynooth business, and very hot and violent even to bitterness. I spoke—I hope not violently, but, alas! much bitterness in many. I reproached for Methodism. My own final judgment not made up on the Catholic Question—I strongly incline to their coming into parliament, though not to their seeing with other men's (priests') eyes." He was arriving slowly at his ultimate conviction, that in the elective franchise we had already given to the Romanists the power for which they were contending; and that the continuance of the disabilities only irritated whilst it strengthened them; that external pressure kept them from disunion, whilst a protestant profession made their representatives more dangerous. Yet he was not so sanguine as to deem this Bill a panacea.

"I have read," he says,[21] "the article[22] on the Irish Catholic Question which you mention. Some parts of it are very able, but the fundamental error in it, and in all the reasonings on the same side, appears to me to be this: They assume, that grant what is called Catholic Emancipation, and all obnoxious distinctions are done away; whereas, not to mention several grievances of the lower orders, the greatest remains in full force, namely, that a set of 'heretic teachers' should usurp the honours and emoluments of 'the Catholic Church.' Throughout all ranks of ecclesiastical functionaries every true Sosia sees

[21] To the Rev. Francis Wrangham.
[22] In the Edinburgh Review.

a false Sosia fattening on his right. Pursue the train of ideas." In the present session he lifted up his voice against the system of agitation by which the measure was already driven forward, pointing out its inconsistency with the principle of the Union as laid down by Mr. Pitt, that admission into parliament might hereafter be granted to the Roman Catholics with greater safety, or withheld from them with greater justice." "May 28th. Catholic Question. Grattan's speech excellent and temperate. I spoke, and though abstaining from all reflections on popery, and arguing the question on grounds of time and circumstances, I was extremely abused."[23] "We have had a very long and most unpleasant debate," he writes the next day. "It is grievous to see that we are only nominally a Protestant people."[24] "Alas, they are driving the Roman Catholics to rebellion. How mad to be thus stimulating them, by telling them they are enslaved and oppressed! It is irreligion and immorality of which Ireland is sick. These popery has increased and fomented."[25]

Business meanwhile was increasing on his hands. Private cases abounded. Clients of every kind crowded his ante-room and breakfast table; and friends flocked round him at all hours, and assembled daily at his easy and hospitable dinner. The parliamentary attendance was "the most severe" he "ever knew;" so that though "the country was exquisitely beautiful in the first burst of spring, or rather summer," he

[23] Diary.
[24] To James Stephen Esq. May 22.
[25] Diary, May 26.

"never got to Broomfield, being often absent from" his "family from Monday morning to Saturday night, or even Sunday morning."[26] In truth he was ever watching at his post, the ready supporter, both in and out of parliament, of every moral and religious question. Every morning he was at "the Smithfield Market Committee, in the hope of altering the Monday market," though the "room was hot" and "little done. Parties so strong—ours most respectable, theirs far most numerous; so much so that painful to persevere, but we must please God, and assert His cause." "Shattered from a bad night, from being uneasy at not having reprobated M. A. Taylor's shameless declaration,[27] 'that interest alone to be our guide, not right or justice.' The House only laughed, and he mistook it. I was over-persuaded, but I deeply repented, and still am sorry." The right discharge of these peculiar duties called for a forbearing temper, no less than for vigilance and firmness. "The Edinburgh Review" had "just published a violent paper against East Indian Missions. The effect of their paper about Methodism in the last number" was "perceptible in the House of Commons, and" he "saw that we are likely to be more run at. Oh that I might feel more the power of Divine things!"[28]

This temper soon found vent in the debates upon a Bill devised by Bishop Porteus, for securing better salaries to curates. It was bitterly assailed by the Whig opposition, as infringing upon vested rights, and threatening injury to the established Church. A fierce

[26] Diary. [27] On the Expedition to the Dardanelles. [28] Diary.

"attack" was made "by Windham and Dr. Lawrence upon a certain party in the Church favoured by one of the bishops. I find I am very obnoxious just now to opposition, and I much suspect this is retaliation for political offences. May God only enable me to do my duty."[29] It was in vain that he protested his "admiration for the Church of England, resulting from long experience, and a careful study of its doctrines." "Methodism" was "sneered at," and he "reproached with it." Such insinuations could not be repelled. "Some persons call you a Calvinist, and every man a Methodist who says his prayers; a stupid and provoking error, which the old Duke of Bridgewater had the merit of making entertaining, from the singular absurdity with which he always called Bishop Porteus, 'that confounded Presbyterian,' they having had some canal difference of interests."[30] Neither the age nor the mild virtue of "the truly simple, benevolent, and pleasing" Bishop could save him from assault. A year before, he told Mr. Wilberforce, that he had lost much of his "activity of mind and body; and no wonder, after a laborious life of seventy-five years. With the third reading of the Slave Trade Bill ended my parliamentary life; and a good finale I think it was; Hic cœstus artemque repono."[31] He was now "sadly sunk in strength, so that it was affecting to see him; yet full of kindness, cheerfulness, and piety."[32] But still he was a "missionary favourer;" and as such

[29] Diary. [30] Letter from the Hon. I. Villiers, April 19, 1816.
[31] See Correspondence.
[32] Letter of Mr. Wilberforce to Hannah More.

came in for his full share of bitter crimination. Two days after the debate he wrote to Mr. Wilberforce.

"Fulham House, June 10.

"Dear Sir,

In the Times of yesterday morning, Mr. Creevey is reported to have said in his speech on the Curates' Bill on Wednesday night, that I had given a living of £1200 a year to a missionary to Bussorah; and I do not see that any contradiction was given to this groundless assertion. The truth is, I have given a living of £700 a year to Mr. Usko, a Prussian clergyman, who is the greatest oriental scholar in Europe; and whom I thought it worth while to retain at any price in this country, for the double purpose of reviving Oriental literature, (which is falling fast into decay in this kingdom,) and of applying his great talents and extensive knowledge of Eastern languages to the elucidation and illustration of the sacred writings.

"I should not like to have these preposterous calumnies go into the world uncontradicted; yet I do not see that any answer was given to them in the House of Commons. But in some future stage of the Bill I hope some of my friends will defend me against such unfounded charges. Mr. Usko never was a missionary to any place whatever; and how high his character stands with those who know him best, you will see from the enclosed little pamphlet.

I am, dear Sir,
very faithfully yours,
B. London."

The eyes of Europe were now fixed upon the Spanish patriots, who promised an effectual resistance to the modern "scourge of God." "Sheridan would, against the advice of all the opposition friends, electrify the country on the Spanish business. He came down to the House, but the opportunity being delayed, he going up-stairs got so drunk, as to make him manifestly and disgracefully besotted. Yet he seemed to remember a fair speech, for the topics were good; only he was like a man catching through a thick medium at the objects before him. Alas, a most humiliating spectacle; yet the papers state him to have made a brilliant speech, &c. So true is what Cobbett[33] said of his friendship to the editors and reporters."[34]

"Accounts from Spain" now stated, "that there are universal risings; and our fleet admitted into Cadiz, and Spaniards joining with us against the French, and French army defeated by patriots near Sierra Morena. I cannot but hope that God, through the destruction of the Spanish political despotism, will also destroy the popish bondage and darkness, and (probably after much suffering) shine on them with the light of truth." These hopes made him earnest in the cause, and upon the 4th of July he went "to a Spanish meeting, called by Colonel Greville, at the Argyle Rooms. Found no one gentleman there; Bowdler and Macaulay coming out, and Zenobio ashamed, and walked off."[35] The same evening he

[33] Vid. Cobbett's Political Reg. 1803.
[34] Diary, June 14.
[35] Diary.

declared in the House of Commons, after "hearing the King's speech, how much he wished for an address upon the subject. A great oversight omitting it, as the Speaker suggested to me." The opportunity was lost; and on the 7th he was "off from London" for the summer. Barham Court was his first halting-place.

"After more than once putting off the day of our departure," he writes upon the 8th, "we at length cut our cable, and leaving an anchor or two in the ground, if for figure's sake you will allow two cows, a pony, and much dead as well as quick stock, to be so denominated, and arrived last night at this hospitable mansion with all our little ones. But all morning long, even in this paradise, I have been employed in quill-driving; for I have brought with me an immense mass of unanswered letters, which I long to get through, that I may go to some more pleasing and useful occupation. I long to play the parent a little more than I am able while parliament is sitting." With this intention he soon moved on to his fixed summer quarters, and upon the 16th of July was settled with his family at East-Bourne. Spanish interests still occupied his mind and tinged his correspondence. "They really penetrate to the very bottom of the præcordia." [36]

"East-Bourne, July 19, 1808.

"My dear Muncaster,

How many a mile are we now separated! yet, in confirmation of Cowper's beautiful line, 'How

[36] To Lord Sidmouth, Aug. 11.

fleet is a glance of the mind!' in a moment I can fly on the wings of imagination, from the shore of the Channel to Julius Cæsar's old castle in Eskdale. It seems shamefully long since I wrote to you, but you have kindly let me know of your goings-on, for which I thank you.

"What an extraordinary spectacle is now exhibiting in Spain! Surely Buonaparte would not have proceeded as he has done, if he had not been absolutely intoxicated by his prosperity. To publish to the world that Joseph Buonaparte was to be King, and his children in hereditary succession to succeed to the crown after his death; and failing his issue, Louis and his heirs; and failing Louis, Jerome and his heirs; and failing all these, to revert to us, Napoleon! Surely this is so heaping insult on injury, that he might have foreseen that human nature would scarcely bear it. I have often thought that it might perhaps please God to pull down this giant when raised to his highest elevation, and apparently glorying the most reasonably, as well as most proudly, in his strength. Do you recollect the chapter in Isaiah, in which the prophet introduces the King of Assyria as at first boasting of his victories, and after having been reminded that he was but an instrument in the hand of the Almighty, he is represented as brought down to the pit amid contempt and derision. Lowth, I remember, justly states it to be, for its length, the finest poem almost in existence.

"Surely it is much to be regretted, as I stated in the House, though I was made by some of the news-

papers to say something very different, that there was not a joint address of both Houses of parliament (which might have been called forth by a message from the Crown) on the Spanish affairs. So strongly did I feel this, that I even went to the Argyle Rooms, though it was the first time I ever was in Col. Greville's petit thêatre. I was aware that I should expose myself to some ridicule if the meeting were not attended. The opposition I find would not go, because they were not concerned in the affair; and, would you think it? Col. Greville, who did not seem aware of the curious inconsistency of the account he was giving, told me that Mr. Whitbread had stated to him that the King's Speech was the place to which men ought to look for the opinions and feelings of the country on Spanish affairs. I could not help remarking that it was the first time in this session that I had heard such a sentiment from Mr. Whitbread. I must break off for the present, but, please God, will write again soon, when I have got through my epistolary arrear. Farewell, and believe me

ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

TO MRS. HANNAH MORE.

"East-Bourne, July 25, 1808.

"My dear Friend,

* * * * * * * * *

After leaving Broomfield I carried my whole household to Barham Court. Though our old friend did not at first look quite the same as formerly, I really

forgot all difference, if any there was, after having been with him for a week. He retains all his old energy; takes his rides—was reading Townshend's Travels to refresh his recollection as to Spain, &c.

"I have a thousand things to say to you. That I should have got so far, and not have mentioned Spain, is almost a reproach to both of us; to me, as if I were void of all proper feeling; and to you, as if you were to be suspected of the same deficiency. I suppose it is with difficulty you restrain sister Patty from going as a volunteer, while you are rubbing up your Spanish that you may assist in diffusing patriotic sentiments through the whole Peninsula. I rejoice in the merchants' dinner. Parliament's not doing any thing was a sad omission. But I must break off. Farewell.

Believe me ever most sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He was the more deeply interested in the success of the Spanish arms from its apparent bearing on the cause of Abolition. These hopes he soon expressed to Mr. Stephen.

"My dear Stephen,

Just at present the Spanish patriots must necessarily be wholly engrossed by the exigencies of their own situation, but doubtless they are precisely in the circumstances in which, if it please God they succeed, (and may the Almighty favour them,) that generous temper of mind will be produced, which will abhor oppression and cruelty, consequently will abolish

the Slave Trade. And surely we ought to be immediately taking all proper preparatory measures for diffusing information on the subject. Such prospects open to my view when I look around on both sides of the Atlantic, as quite to enrapture me. To the fertile soil of your mind let me commit the seed of this idea, and let me earnestly conjure you to give it immediate attention. Many of the priests appear to have joined the popular cause in Spain; probably therefore also in Portugal. They may perhaps be worked on by the double motives of the spirit of liberty and of religion, to exert themselves for so glorious an object as ours. I will immediately write to Canning, desiring him to mention the subject to the Spanish deputies. Do you desire Perceval to do the same. I have an idea also of writing to Lord Holland, as well as to Brougham, whom we ought here to carry along with us, for his knowledge of Portugal people, &c. render him capable of being a useful ally. Farewell.

I am ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

At East-Bourne he had escaped the crowd of visitors who dogged his Broomfield hours, and he rejoiced in being able to associate freely with his family, and find some time for meditation and for study. But one great hinderance still remained. His letters still followed, pouring in upon him in multitudes. "They are become an unspeakable plague to me. They form my chief occupation, and I must contrive some means of lessening the time spent on

them; for there is no acquisition of knowledge, no exercise or improvement of talents."[37] Yet he was as far as possible from cultivating an idle and unmeaning correspondence. "I am too like her," he says after reading Miss Seward's Letters, "in one particular, that, I mean, of the proportion of my time spent on writing letters. But not I trust from the same motives. Mine are really necessary. She seems to have cultivated the acquaintance of all persons of any note, literary, social, or of any other kind; when separated from them a correspondence sprung up; hence her 144 quarto volumes of letters between 1784 and 1810; the first, the very year I became M. P. for Yorkshire. She really had talents and reading; but how much more usefully and honourably would she have been employed, had she, like Hannah More, been teaching the poor, or still more in writing such books as Hannah More!"[38] In truth, his correspondence, like his open house, and broken London mornings, sprung of necessity from his peculiar situation. Without them he could not have been for years the advocate of every moral and religious cause; the friend and counsellor of all who were in need of counsel; the very Attorney-General of the unprotected and the friendless. "Almost entirely consumed," is one of his complaints, "by letters, yet it appears the part of Christian courtesy to answer correspondents; and so much suffering would in each case be produced by my not answering, compared with the trouble it costs, that I know not how to abstain. I

[37] Diary. [38] Ib. Nov. 7, 1811.

have written lately an immense number—several on important objects—to-day one on missions. Having heard of the Duke of York's being designed for commander of the army, I resolved, however invidious, to state objections strongly; and wrote to Perceval. I am now writing to Jefferson in America, to obtain some agreement between the two nations, for giving effect to Abolition, by allowing each country to take the other's slave ships."

"A compact formed between our two countries," he tells Jefferson in the conclusion of his letter, "for the benevolent purpose of stopping, perhaps, the most destructive scourge that ever afflicted the human race, may lead to similar agreements with other countries, until at length all the civilized nations of the earth shall have come into this concert of benevolence. It was by a compact of a similar nature, established between a number of different independent states, that, in the darkness and anarchy of the middle ages, the ravages of private war were arrested in a great part of Europe for near three centuries; during which period political order, respect for the laws, together with the equal administration of justice, made a considerable progress. Surely a better precedent cannot be followed. Surely there can never exist an occasion more proper for resorting to such a measure; and may we not hope that the adoption of it would now be followed in Africa by the same happy consequences which it formerly produced in Europe."

"I long," he says a little later, "to write my projected religious work, but have first several jobs to do,

not one of which however is yet begun. My letters still almost engross me. True, they are important letters—keeping up connexion with constituents in absence from the county; also some religious letters, and some letters of friendship." Some of these last are delightful exhibitions of the play and freedom of his mind, when not overborne by harassing engagements. Such is a letter of this date to Mrs. Hannah More.

"East-Bourne, Aug. 2, 1808.

"My dear Friend,

I cannot resist the impulse I feel to take up my pen on the spot, after reading your most interesting letter. O thank you, thank you a thousand times; ('friend, dost thou count them?') I really have not had my spirits so elevated since I came to East-Bourne. I have attended you all through your shiftings of the scene, and your sister Sally also; have been with you to church, travelled with you to Weymouth, and rejoiced almost as much as you (not near so much as Patty, who really, besides other gladdening considerations, has I think somewhat of a military turn) over the glories of Sergeant Hill, (how different from Sergeant Kite!) Could I but be affected at the Cheddar feast-day? the twentieth anniversary! Can it really be?' Then I have been of your party with Malthus, &c. But above all, I have sympathized with you, with him, and with the honest villagers, on Young's return to Blagden—Cicero's from banishment was nothing to it.

"But after giving vent to these first ebullitions, (to take my figure from the barrel of brown stout just arrived, and for the same reason,) I must leave you for less acceptable society. Be assured however that if, as you say, you have not for many a day written such a letter, so for many a day neither has any letter given so much pleasure as yours. But now these frothy joys having fumed away, as South would have said, I really come to some more solid and substantial pleasure. Your mention of the schools being now attended by so many of the children of those who once were scholars, opens a prospect so extensive, and at the same time so delightful, that I cannot yet take my eyes from it. So I trust it will continue to be for generations yet unborn; and that when you and your fellow-labourers are in the world of spirits, you will welcome into the blessed society troop after troop, in long succession, of those who can trace up the work of God in their hearts to *the ladies* at Cheddar, as its spring-head and ultimate fountain.

"Poor Addington! and yet you would mischievously check the current of my feelings when in full flow, by your kind memorandum, that the fall you were speaking of was not Lord S.'s fall from power, but his own fall down Lord S.'s stairs. But to be more serious, what a resource does Christianity offer to disappointed men, and yet offer it in vain! How merciful and condescending is our God! willing to take the world's leavings, and to accept those who come to Him (if they will but come) only when they have no where else to go. But I must leave you.

As I have gone so far, instead of putting down my sheet, as I had intended, to be finished some leisure quarter of an hour, I'll send it off as it is, to carry the warm impressions of the heart fresh from being taken. I have a whole budget full of matter ready for you, had I but time—but that grows more and more deficient. Farewell, I've told Mrs. W. what a treat I have for her after dinner in your letter. I read it inter ambulandum by the sea-side. I am ever

Your affectionate and faithful Friend,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Another of these friendly letters is worth preserving.

"East-Bourne, Sept. 7, 1808.

"My dear Muncaster,

I see you know this coast; that is, all about it probably in the state in which it was before it was made an iron frontier to resist the attacks of our opposite neighbour. Yet, ironed as we are, two or three shabby little privateers, who, as far as we know, had not one cannon among them, came off the coast about a week ago, took four or five vessels close to the land, so near that when one was captured even musketry would have reached them, and hovered for ten or twelve hours so near as would have forfeited them to the Crown under the smuggling acts; yet though we have above 1500 troops, a corps of engineers, a fort which must have cost £2 or 300,000, flying artillery, &c. not the hair of the head of a

Frenchman was injured, or a feather in his wing discomposed. Where there was a cannon there was no ammunition, where a favourable situation no cannon: the officers were all out of the way, though the affair lasted so long; and as for a ship of war, it was a nondescript. I must say I seldom have been more provoked, than to have thirty or forty poor fellows carried into a French gaol, when the slightest preparation for resistance by those who are paid and maintained for the sole purpose of resistance, would have prevented all the mischief.

"But what a gratifying transition across the Bay of Biscay! Most cordially do I congratulate you, my dear Muncaster, on the happy change of affairs in the Spanish peninsula, and on the glorious achievements of our brave soldiery—to be vainqueur des vainqueurs du monde is a high commendation. What cause have we for thankfulness! I cannot but hope that this humiliation of imperial arrogance is meant for some good issue. I am pressed for time, but I was strongly prompted by your letter, which I have just received, to send you back a few lines. Believe me ever, my dear friend,

Yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

With "inconceivable sorrow" he heard just at this time "of all the schoolmasters being dismissed in Ceylon. We are to save only about £1500 by what is the moral and religious ruin of the island. O Lord, how deeply do we provoke Thy resentment! Yet have mercy on us, and spare us, much as we deserve

punishment. I have had some intercourse with Lord Castlereagh about it."[39] Happily he did not remonstrate fruitlessly; some of the old schools were restored, and the place of others supplied by new institutions. "I enclose for your private information," was Lord C.'s reply, "the letter I have written to Ceylon, relative to schoolmasters, of which I hope you will approve." This happy interposition he reports to Mr. Babington.

"East-Bourne, Sept. 28, 1808.

"My dear Babington,

* * * * * * *

I am vexed beyond measure, to tell you that I really have done little since I came here but write letters. Numbers of them have been of very great importance. Still as the summer is my only time for pouring in, I am likely to become as hollow as an empty cask, especially as I am but a leaky vessel. I have been writing to Lord Castlereagh about the conduct of government, in breaking up, for the purpose of saving I am told about £1800, nearly all the schools in Ceylon—near two hundred masters, who acted as catechists, and instructed near 200,000 willing learners in the principles of Christianity. I have since been shocked by a proclamation of the Governor, wherein he vindicates publicly his rights, privileges, revenues, and presidences for the priest of the temple of Candy, whom *we* appoint, having the greatest confidence in his eminent qualities, fidelity, and ability. The ob-

[39] Diary, Sept. 11.

ject is to secure the attachment of the priests of Budhoo, and to pull down the Modaliars, who are chiefly Christians; doing away a rule which has always been adhered to from the first European possession of the island, that natives are only capable of holding offices if Christians. You cannot conceive (yes, you can on recollection) how cool Lord Castlereagh was about the schools, &c. Yet something passed which showed the benefit of our parliamentary discussions, and gave me ground to stand on, better than I could otherwise have had.

"I will say nothing of public affairs, except that I think you would wish, if at all, to receive such an account as that of the Portugal convention when at the house of your friend the Lord Advocate; because there would then be a chance of seeing his face without a smile; and really one would like to see how he would look in such a situation for the mere novelty: where there is perpetual sunshine, I suppose even a gloomy day is a pleasing variety. Seriously, I have been deeply hurt. The stroke fell just when our feelings made the discord of such a note the most inharmonious.

"I shall like hereafter to talk with you about your Scotch tour. Farewell. I do not like to break off without one serious word. May our gracious God watch over you, and bless you.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Another letter written during the same month illustrates the nature of his various employments.

TO W. ALERS ESQ.[40]

"East-Bourne, Sept. 12, 1808.

"Dear Sir,

Though I have not the pleasure of being personally known to you, an apology or an introduction was wholly unnecessary for any one writing to me on such a subject[41] as that of your letter; and for you, let the subject of your letter have been what it would. I can open my mind to you with the frankness with which I should address an old acquaintance; and therefore I state without reserve, that the subject on which you have written to me is one on which I have been thinking, and consulting, and discussing, and sometimes even acting, for many years. About thirteen or fourteen years ago we actually had a bill in the House of Commons which went through many stages, but was at length thrown out.

"I could not without going into great length say all that would be necessary to state to you, to give you complete information on this subject. When parliament meets again, I shall be very happy D. V. to talk it over with you; and to consider, in conjunction with yourself and others who are aware of the extreme importance of the end in view, whether there is such a reasonable probability of carrying any new bill for better enforcing the due observance of the

[40] Now W. Alers Hankey Esq.

[41] Obtaining some additional legislative protection for the Lord's day.

Lord's day, as to render it prudent to bring it forward. I feel that you really do me honour in what you say concerning my bringing such a proposition forward; but on that head I should have much to observe of an opposite tendency.

"Meanwhile I remain, with cordial esteem and regard, my dear sir,

Your faithful Servant,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His correspondent had referred to the Abolition as affording a ground for his application .... "That important object, which has formed the great labour of your life, being through the Divine blessing happily accomplished, your active mind disdaining repose in a world where so much is needful to be done, has doubtless contemplated new scenes of exertion." But the state of the Slave Trade still continued to be a constant call upon his attention. On this subject he now wrote to Mr. Macaulay.

"East-Bourne, Sept. 5, 1808.

"My dear Sir,

I will myself write to Consul Gambier, with whom I am a little acquainted, begging him to be on the watch, and to set proper persons on the look-out, to detect any British ships or men bringing slaves into Brazil. I will also desire Perceval to see that special instructions are given to the chief revenue officers in Trinidad, and the continent, (I mean Demerara, &c.) to stimulate their exertions. I also

will write to Canning, but I will beg him to consult with Stephen for particular regulations.

"I will mention to Perceval the idea of a bond. Were it not for the sake of the poor slaves themselves, I should quite enjoy suffering the Liverpool villany to ripen to its full maturity, and then to pluck it from the blood-stained hand which would be just about to grasp it; but by preventing the crime in its earlier stages, we shall prevent much individual suffering. I am quite thankful that you have succeeded so well in finding proper instruments for Sierra Leone. As for ———, I could almost be pleased with his being such as he seems to be. It certainly was requisite to the consistency of the character. An appointment so made, an office so filled, ought to have its duties so executed. But I beg that means may be taken for bringing Perceval, at least, acquainted with his goings-on.

"I will send D. V. the American letter. Your few little words, though so modestly put, cut me to the very quick—I mean your short question, 'How goes on the critique on Fox?' I am ashamed to say, it can scarcely be said to be begun, except that I have been reading a good deal, in order to refresh my memory on the events of that period. But I am grieved to think how the six weeks, for so long I have now been here, have been employed—four-fifths of my time consumed in letter-writing. I can make to you the same sort of excuse which was made to a worthy friend of mine, rector of a parish in Norfolk, by a parishioner whom my friend had been reproving for never having come to church for a long period.

'Why to be sure,' replied the man, 'I have not come to church much, but I assure your honour I have gone no where else'—So I can plead to you. But really, my dear friend, I find that it would take me a year's study, (not of such little broken periods as alone I now enjoy, but of real good days' work,) to make up my mind satisfactorily on even a part only of the many important facts and questions which come before any one who reviews the period between 1625, (Charles the First's beginning to reign,) and the Revolution. But I am resolved I will send you something, and therefore I must be content, and so must you, with a far less satisfactory and complete work than I should be glad to send.

"Another idea has struck me—whether it might not be useful for me to get pretty well acquainted with the Spanish and Portuguese deputies. Certainly, advantage should be taken of their being here, to make them acquainted with the real nature of the Slave Trade, &c. Is there any person who will translate into Spanish any English piece on the Slave Trade? I desired both Canning, and Perceval, and Brougham, and Lord Holland to attend to the deputies.

"I am not quite well to-day, and must stop for the present. You and yours I hope are all well. I don't know what we should do without you. I am sure I can truly declare, that when I think how much you get through, I shrink back into my shell with shame. Farewell, my dear sir, and believe me

ever most sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The same subject appears in a letter from East-Bourne to Mr. William Smith.

"I had a very obliging letter from Lord Holland, to whom I took the liberty of writing with a view to having the Spanish deputies well impregnated with Abolitionism. I was glad to find that the subject had fully occupied his mind. * * I have been hearing by snatches, while dressing, (the only time, observe, when I could read or hear reading hitherto,) Fox's History, and I long to undertake a more deliberate perusal. I do not happen to have heard many people speak of it. The few whose opinions have reached me, were people strongly opposed to Fox in politics, and who did not at all know the man. They certainly gave me reason to expect something very different from what I have found. He seems to write under a strong party bias, but with perfect integrity; I mean, with an earnest desire to make out and relate the truth. He has evidently digested his matter thoroughly; and there are several remarks, as I already see, which bear traces of Fox's superior vigour of intellect. How much one wishes such a man could have written a history of England from the times of Alfred! If any thing frets me, (choquer is the French word,) it is two or three not very good-natured allusions to the politics of his own times. But in another view, even these please me, by showing how much he felt in earnest in them; and where that is the case, and there is no shabby view of a mercenary kind, I can forgive all the rest."

But "a more deliberate perusal" led him greatly to qualify this favourable judgment. "I own as I have proceeded reading the work with more care than I had done when the observations in the preface were written, I see far more reason for censure than I formerly did; above all, I see far more party bias." "I believe Fox meant to be perfectly impartial, though he certainly was, in fact, grievously otherwise. Meaning however to correct his partial representations, I should really like to do justice to what I believe to have been his feelings. But I have a notion with respect to him and other such men, whose understandings are vigorous, and their feelings warm, that they are ardent in their emotions in behalf of truth, justice, the oppressed, &c.; yet take them in their cool moments, and they are not so deliberately and practically observant of the duties with which these several sets of emotions are connected, as many a simple honest man whose passions are far less susceptible. This observation, if true, greatly illustrates Fox's character, and explains what might at first sight appear an inconsistency, that he was honest in his sympathies with the oppressed and injured, warm in his love of justice and truth, and yet by no means an accurate man (far less so than Pitt) in his assertions."[42]

The promised review was soon afterwards supplied. It is full of valuable thought, though "the most productive time" he could give up for composition was "in the morning whilst dressing," and many of the

[42] To Zachary Macaulay Esq.

questions which he wished to solve were left untouched. "I find there is no end of entering into a discussion of the questions started by Mr. Fox in the introductory chapter. Alps on Alps arise as one proceeds to investigate it. But I am disposed to give a little account of the party system, as Fox most broadly lays down the doctrine of his party, by condemning and grossly misapplying the dictum, 'not men but measures.' Does it not however strike you that there is a certain philosophical spirit throughout, very hostile to the spirit of Christianity, as well as a manifest hatred, in him poor fellow but too natural, to the Church of England."[43]

East-Bourne was his head-quarters until the 19th of November, when he took possession of a new house at Kensington Gore, of which he had bought a twenty-five years' lease in the preceding spring. It was not without "great regret that" he "gave up Broomfield, a place endeared to" him "by much happiness enjoyed in it, as well as by its own beauty. I give up also the living near my friends in this circle; yet I trust my connexion with them is so firm that the removal will not weaken it." The Dean of Carlisle suggested another incidental benefit, pointing out to him "a danger in living altogether at Clapham—danger of conceit and spiritual pride, and a cold, critical spirit. He imputes this less to me than to some others—but the danger great."[44] Upon the whole, he thought "the change of residence best—may God bless it—I trust that it is made on grounds of which He approves."

[43] To Zachary Macaulay Esq. [44] Diary.

The distance of Broomfield made a London house essential to his parliamentary attendance, and separated him almost entirely from his family. By settling within a mile of Hyde Park Corner, he hoped to be much oftener with them; and by the exchange of "the old house in Palace Yard," for "lodgings on the Terrace, (for I must have a nest close to the House of Commons,)" he hoped to promote that economy by which he still kept up his ample charities.

These ends were in a measure answered. As long, indeed, as he sat for Yorkshire, and actively "represented a tenth part of England," he was often kept throughout the week at his lodgings in Westminster. Yet upon the whole he was more with his family; and from the size of his new house was able to exercise, with greater comfort, the hospitality in which he delighted. There are still many who remember with no little interest, the cheerful and enlightened intercourse of the house and grounds of Kensington Gore. The house was seldom free from guests when he was in it. The first hours in the morning were all that he could strictly call his own, and these were spent in devotional exercises. "I always find that I have most time for business, and it is best done, when I have most properly observed my private devotions." "In the calmness of the morning," was his common observation, "before the mind is heated and wearied by the turmoil of the day, you have a season of unusual importance for communing with God and with yourself." After this secret intercourse with his heavenly Father, which cheered

and sustained his laborious pilgrimage, he joined his assembled household for morning prayer—a service which he conducted himself, and with peculiar interest. With breakfast, which was thus made somewhat late, began his first throng of visitors. His ante-room, which still justified abundantly the witty simile[45] of Hannah More, furnished many breakfast guests; and his extraordinary social powers were never seen to more advantage, than in drawing out and harmonizing all the shades of character and feeling which were here brought suddenly together. Thus whilst he was endeavouring to relax the stiffness of a "starched little fellow whom" he "was anxious not to disgust, Andrew Fuller was announced —a man of considerable powers of mind, but who bore about him very plainly the vestigia ruris. Not a moment was to be lost. So before he came in I said to my little friend, 'You know Andrew Fuller?' 'No, I never heard his name.' 'Oh then you must know him; he is an extraordinary man, whose talents have raised him from a very low situation.' This prepared the way, and Andrew Fuller did no harm, although he walked in looking the very picture of a blacksmith."

He was often amused by these harmless incongruities. "Southey," he said, whilst the account of Dr. Coke's visit to America in Wesley's Life was being read to him, "never could have seen the Doctor. I wish I could forget his little round face and short figure. Any one who wished to take

[45] Vid. vol. i. p. 257.

off a Methodist could not have done better than exactly copy his manner and appearance. He looked a mere boy when he was turned fifty, with such a smooth apple face, and little round mouth, that if it had been forgotten you might have made as good a one by thrusting in your thumb. He was waiting once to see me in a room, into which some accident brought Bankes. The Doctor made I suppose some strange demonstration, for he sent Bankes to Milner's room, saying in amazement, 'What extraordinary people Wilberforce does get around him!'" "A large party to dinner," he says about this time, "of very miscellaneous materials; some whom I had asked and who had sent no answer; others coming without notice. Dr. Constancio, Portuguese physician, intelligent, speaks English; Mr. Townshend, Dissenting minister, from Borough; Mr. Proctor from Yarmouth, James Stephen, Dicey, and some more. Rational day enough."

There were some amongst his nearest connexions who grudged the expenditure of time and the sacrifice of domestic privacy which this mode of life required. To a suggestion that he should withdraw to a greater distance from London in order to escape from it, Mr. Stephen well replied —"There is a peculiar and very important species of usefulness to friends and acquaintances, for which Wilberforce's character and manners fit him in an extraordinary degree; and this talent can no where perhaps be traded with to greater profit than at Kensington. I think too that his public usefulness

is promoted by having so respectable a mansion, so much in the eye of the public, and within reach of all who have business with him, or to whom his attention as leader in great public causes ought to be paid. Constituted as the world is, example and influence will be the more efficacious, the more personal consequence is attached to them; and personal consequence will be measured by strangers, nay, insensibly by those who are not strangers, in a certain degree by external appearances. A good house is the most effectual way of attaining this advantage. It meets every eye. It costs far less than the support of splendid equipages and bands of livery servants, or than grand fêtes and entertainments. I have often thought when I saw strangers, to whom Wilberforce for important reasons wished to be courteous, at Kensington Gore, that his house made them take in better part that seeming inequality in the ceremonial forms of life, which his health, hurry, &c. generally oblige him to exact. Besides, there he is in the eye of the great and fashionable world, while they drive in Hyde Park, with appearances that proclaim he might live like them if he would, that it is not for want of fortune Wilberforce has not like others sunk his name in a title; and that while he abstains from fashionable luxuries, he indulges himself in those congruities to his station and fortune, which best become the English gentleman and the Christian, in the means of family comfort, and extensive though simple hospitality.

"In any material degree to exclude guests, would

not only be to impair Wilberforce's usefulness, but to change his nature. And the witnessing his domestic life is one of the best cures I know for prepossessions against religion, best human incentives to the practice of it, and best guards against those errors and excesses into which misdirected zeal is apt to run.

"Too much stress, I am aware, may be laid on this kind of usefulness, and it ought not to supersede relative duties of a nearer kind. Still, however, there is something peculiar in Wilberforce's character and situation, that seem to point it out as the design of Providence, that he should serve his Master in this high and special walk; and should have, so to speak, a kind of *domestic publicity*—that he should be at home a candle set on a candlestick, as well as abroad a city built upon a hill.

"But here perhaps, as usual, we may find an unforeseen coincidence between the dictates of particular and general duties; and that blessings are in fact husbanded, when they appear to be from an excess of benevolence too liberally diffused. If Wilberforce were less hospitable, sure I am, his children would see less of what may be most useful to them in his example. They would have less of that important and difficult lesson, how to live with the world, and yet not be of the world. They would be less likely to learn how to have their conversation in heaven, without renouncing the society of man; how to be cheerful in company, and to please both friends and strangers, without any sacrifice of Christian character. Besides, it is of unspeakable importance that

they will thus gain a taste for the pleasures of Christian society, and for that very superior tone of conversation, which distinguishes their father's table and their father's fire-side. I do not think you are sufficiently aware of this superiority. The trash, the trifles, the insipidities, that make up conversation in general, form a disgusting contrast with even the worst table-talk that one generally meets at his house. Wilberforce himself does not see a tenth part so much of this as I have done, because he knows how to lead conversation wherever he goes; but rest assured, his home parties are in this respect useful schools for his children."

This is a good picture of his household economy. It abounded in cheerful hospitality, and in the highest charms of conversation and social intercourse: but there was nothing costly or luxurious in his style of living; these were banished on principle, and none of his guests missed them. "You can do what you please," said a friend, who was celebrated for the excellence of his table; "people go to you to hear you talk, not for a good dinner." "I am almost ashamed," was the thankful simplicity of his own remark when first entering Kensington Gore, "of the handsomeness of my house, my verandah, &c." "I am almost uneasy about my house and furniture, lest I am spending too much money upon it, so as to curtail my charities." The very next entry is a good commentary on this characteristic fear. "E. forced his way in to see me—the poor midshipman who about eight months ago wrote to me from Morpeth gaol, at the

suit of a tailor for uniform, whom I got released, and sent him a few pounds. He called to thank me, and said he should never forget my kindness—not ashamed of it; and would subscribe five pounds per annum to Small Debt Society. Eat yesterday a turkey, sent me by the person whom I helped to recover a landed estate of three or four hundred pounds per annum."

The brief record, a few lines further on, of a visit to an early friend, who had been a keen and a successful suitor for riches and advancement, furnishes a striking contrast to his own happier simplicity of choice. "To N.'s to dinner, Lord and Lady E. there, and others. The place most complete, and built and fitted up at a vast expense. His son a sweet-looking boy, quite manly; but all, I fear, honourable and dishonourable! N. has a most anxious face, and she too." "Oh how does that little sentence, 'The time is short,' laugh to scorn all the left-handed wisdom of these politic contrivers!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

DECEMBER 1808 TO JULY 1810.

New house—Spanish independence—Meeting of parliament—Sunday travelling—Death of Dr. Burgh—Duke of York—Bible Society—Use and abuse of government influence—East-Bourne—Walcheren expedition—Cowperizing summer—Duel between Castlereagh and Canning—Parliament meets—Censure on Lord Chatham—Sir Francis Burdett—Serious accident—Windham's death—Parliamentary Reform.

THE year 1808 closed upon Mr. Wilberforce with the "worrying business of removing from two other houses the accumulated papers, books, &c. of a whole life, to a residence which is not yet prepared for them; whence the workmen have not yet withdrawn, and will not for some months to come. My main residence is just one mile from Hyde Park Corner, and when finished it will be a very roomy, comfortable house. I am a little unfortunate in coming after a man whose name you must remember, Morgan, who applied to the House of Commons many years ago, on being disappointed of the loan. He himself told me, when showing me the premises, that he saved £8 or 10,000 per annum, and certainly he appears not to have spent as many pence, I beg his pardon, as many farthings, on this residence, in which he lived sixteen or eighteen

years. Not a single gravel walk, and literally as much to do as in a house which had been ten years empty. My kind friend Bernard superintended my improvements, and has executed his commission with great taste.

"Were I not aware to whom I am writing, and that in addressing a friend you naturally open your mind on the petitesses of private life, I should be afraid of being deemed abominably selfish for having expended my sheet on my own little matters, when every head and heart are full of schemes and sympathies for the poor Spaniards—schemes and sympathies more or less sanguine in their nature, according to the temperament of the individual by whom they are formed and felt. I have been one of those, who have not looked for at least any great present triumphs. Yet even the stand which has been already made is wonderful. To what a temper of hardness must that man have brought his mind, who can coolly issue orders, that no quarter shall be given to the peasants taken in arms fighting for their natural monarch against a sovereign set over them by a foreign usurper. Well, we are taught by such instances to look forward to the day of retribution, and it will come."[1]

He was at this time meditating a trip to Bath, and wrote to Mr. Perceval to ascertain the day of meeting. "Parliament," was the reply,[2] "will not meet unless something unforeseen at present should occur, until Monday the 16th of January. I hope therefore

[1] To Lord Muncaster. [2] R. H. S. Perceval to W. Wilberforce Esq.

you will lose no time in getting your health well set up at Bath." His watchfulness for public morals at once suggested to him the amount of Sunday travelling which such a day of meeting would create; and he begged in answer, that it might, if possible, be altered.

"I thank you for your note of yesterday," rejoined the conscientious minister, "and am really sorry that I have given occasion for it. I feel myself the more to blame because, upon the receipt of your note, it brought back to my recollection (what I had till then forgot) some observations which the Speaker made to me some time ago upon the same subject; if they had been present to my mind when we settled the meeting of parliament, I would not have fixed it upon a Monday. We were however almost driven into that day; * * Notwithstanding all these considerations, however, if I had thought, as I ought to have done, of the Sunday travelling, which the meeting on Monday will too probably occasion, I would have preferred meeting on the Friday in the sessions week, with all its inconveniences.

"You have the whole state of the case before you. I am open to your judgment—habes confitentem—for inadvertence is certainly never felt by me as any excuse."

Two days later he wrote again.

"Downing Street, Dec. 10, 1808.

"Dear Wilberforce,

You will be glad to hear that it is determined to postpone the meeting of parliament till Thursday

the 19th, instead of Monday the 16th, to obviate the objections which you have suggested to the meeting on that day.

Yours very truly,

SPENCER PERCEVAL."

"The House," says his Diary, "put off nobly by Perceval, because of the Sunday travelling it would have occasioned."

The year closed with the death of his old friend, Dr. Burgh. "Dec. 28th. This morning heard of dear Burgh's death—how striking! he taken and I left—and not by a stroke, an accident, but by a constitution broken down in a few months."[3]

To Lord Muncaster he writes upon their common loss—

"My dear Muncaster,

The moment almost after I heard of poor Burgh's death, my mind turned to three or four friends who I knew would sympathize with me on that event, and you were one of the number. What a striking instance of the uncertainty of our mortal state! He seemed at one time to have a frame of iron—yet iron will sometimes snap in two. He however, it is remarkable, was carried off, not by a sudden blow, but by a leisurely decay. It is matter of no small pleasure to me to reflect that he was ill so long before the last fatal issue; and that he was in such a state as to be able to use all his mental faculties. Ah! my dear

[3] Diary.

Muncaster, we all need preparation, and are too apt to grow careless and worldly-minded from the cares and the bustle of life. How striking that our friend at Copgrove should survive him! I must break off. My dear friend,

Believe me ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The leisure of the Christmas holidays left him time to look at Cœlebs, which had just appeared. None of Hannah More's usual confidants had been let this time into the secret, and no rumour had betrayed its author. "Cœlebs," says his Diary, "variously talked of. The Henry Thorntons affirm that it cannot be Hannah More's, and are strong against it, surely without reason." His critical discernment was more faithful. "Reading Cœlebs in the afternoon, and much pleased with it; it is Hannah More's all over."

"Kensington Gore, Jan. 7, 1809.

"My dear Friend,

'What! did I not know thy old ward, Hal?' I had not read ten pages before I was reminded of aut Erasmus, &c. And without paying you any compliments, I may say, that it is a piece in my judgment, of which you, even you, with all your well-earned and well-merited credit, need not be ashamed; on the contrary, I really am delighted with it, and have been kept up night after night reading it after supper. I hope too, which will please you better, that it will do as much good, as such a composition,

from its very nature, and from the state of mind it necessarily generates, can do. It will, I trust, draw on to other and more serious studies. It will accredit true religion and its ministers, and its consistent professors. It will—but I must break off. I am come too late from London, and have to prepare for a large party to dinner, preceded by a consultation on a matter of great importance to a friend. The truth is, (to think aloud to yourself and Patty only,) the judgment of our friend Henry, (with whom I argued about your being the author, till I saw there was no use in arguing any longer,) that you were not the author, abundantly justifies your judgment in not consulting him, and if not him, none of us, in the outset or progress."

Before the holidays were over he wrote to Mr. Hey.

"My dear Sir,

I am almost glad if I can surprise you in a little irregularity, or a little want of punctuality. It seems as if I got you thereby into my books, and had a right to plead it as my excuse, if I should ever (which I fear is much more likely than that it should be the case with you) incur to you a debt of friendly attention. Though I have not heard from you, I have heard of you, and that more especially from our friend the Dean; and it gave me sincere pleasure to receive so favourable a report of the state of your health and strength. I am inclined to hope it will please God still to grant you a fine autumn of life; a season which, with better reason than the historian of

nature, as Mr. Gibbon terms him, you might find peculiarly grateful. However, our times and seasons are in the disposal of One who knows far better than we do what is most eligible for us, and who, if it be not our own fault, will cause all things to work together for our good.

" Mr. Marsden's coming over to this country was so opportune, and the services he has been able to render while here are such, that I cannot consider him any otherwise, than as a special instrument of Providence, sent over on a particular errand, just when he could do most good here, and be delivered from most evil in New South Wales. I hope we shall get the moral state of the colony greatly reformed. Alas, in how many instances does our national conduct in foreign countries call aloud for the vengeance of Heaven! I hope I have been able to prevent some shocking violations of our moral duties, and of the first principles of our national religion, in one of our distant settlements, some short time ago.

" I am myself full as well as usual, looking forward to a very unpleasant session. I am quite sick of such incessant brawls as I there witness, while every forward man wishes to bring himself into notice by finding some topic on which he may display his talents. Farewell.

Believe me ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

This " unpleasant session " soon surpassed his gloomiest forebodings. " Wardle's motion on Duke of

York—sad work. No apparent sense in the House of the guilt of adultery, only of the political offence—spoke for any other proceedings than bar of the House. Major Cartwright writes about Parliamentary Reform as the only panacea. Alas! 'tis more a moral disease."[4] "I have wanted greatly to move the examination of the Duke of York's business from the bar, open gallery, &c. to a committee up-stairs, and some parliamentary inquest on oath. This melancholy business will do irreparable mischief to public morals, by accustoming the public to hear without emotion of shameless violations of decency. House examining Mrs. Clarke for two hours—cross-examining her in the Old Bailey way—she elegantly dressed, consummately impudent, and very clever: clearly got the better in the tussle—a number of particulars let out about life, mother, children, &c. Col. Gordon's evidence would have been sufficient, and I would not have asked one question of Mrs. Clarke."[5]

TO WILLIAM HEY ESQ.

"London, February 16, 1809.

"My dear Sir,

What a scene are we exhibiting to the world! It is no more than was to be foreseen by any one who was ever so little acquainted with the House of Commons. We are alive to the political offence, but to the moral crime we seem utterly insensible; and the reception which every double entendre meets in the House, must injure our character greatly with all

[4] Diary, Jan. 26. [5] Feb. 1.

religious minds. It was because I foresaw all this, that I pressed so strongly for a secret committee or some special commission of inquiry.

I remain, my dear Sir,

ever most sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"Mrs. Clarke by fascinating the House has prevented its degradation by appearing to stifle the inquiry, and take too strong a part with the Duke of York—curious to see how strongly she has won upon people."[6] "Duke of York's business deciding. Perceval's capital speech, which greatly changed my opinion as to his guilt, softening though not quite turning me."[7] This judicial tone, so rarely maintained in the heated atmosphere of party, was preserved by a continual reference to unseen realities.—"Lord," was his secret prayer whilst this question was before him, "guide me right in this great business that is now going on. May I be enabled to judge, and speak, and act with a simple desire to please God, free entirely from vanity or love of popular favour on the one side, and from the fear of man on the other. O Lord, above all, teach me to look to Thee, and set my affections on things above."

The debate, which had already occupied two days, was resumed upon the 10th, when Mr. Bankes brought forward a second amendment to Colonel Wardle's motion. It had been "agreed on," says the Diary, "between Bankes, Henry Thornton, myself, and

[6] Feb. 26. [7] March 8.

others," and took a middle line between Mr. Perceval and Colonel Wardle. Upon the 14th he "rose to speak, but others were before" him. On the 15th he "spoke latish. I had prepared myself fully, and never felt myself less easy or warm; and though in some parts what I said was well, in others not so; and the House at last grew impatient and hurried me, and forced me to conclude, after compressing. The fact was, I was very poorly in body."[8] It seems however that the pen could more easily follow him when his usual brilliancy and fire were somewhat obscured by bodily infirmity; for those who compared the report of this speech with that of his most powerful efforts, supposed him rarely to have spoken with such fulness and effect. "I waited anxiously," says a very intelligent constituent, "till the newspaper announced your sentiments, and nunquam, si mihi credas, was I more satisfied. If you had delivered them sooner the effect would have been more powerful."—"Strange that my speech on the Duke of York's business, in which I was so foiled, gave great satisfaction to my friends in the county; more almost than any I ever delivered. Very humiliating."

Mr. Bankes's motion failed, being "negatived by about 95; near 500 members present." The next day was a welcome holiday: "The House having adjourned the Duke of York's business, I staid at Kensington Gore—its peacefulness delightful;" but the contest was renewed the following night.

Saturday Mr. Wilberforce tells Lord Muncaster—

[8] Diary.

"London, March 18, 1809.

"My dear Muncaster,

Perceval carried last night his vote of purgation, but unless the Duke of York should resign before Monday, I am sanguine in my expectation, that we shall either carry the question for his removal, or for some measure which must lead to it, or come so near carrying it, as to render it prudent for him to take the hint. Alas, my dear Muncaster, what scenes have we been unveiling to the peaceful villagers of Cumberland and Westmoreland. If we believe the Bible, we must believe that the vices of the great, both directly and consequentially, call down the judgments of the Almighty; and I may say to you that I am strongly influenced by the persuasion, that by marking such shameful debauchery, thus publicly disclosed, with the stigma of the House of Commons, we should be acting in a manner that would be pleasing to God, and directly beneficial to the morals of the community. On one day the House of Lords were employed on five Divorce Bills, and we in examining Mrs. Clarke. I was reading this morning the 15th of Jeremiah. 'Shall not my soul be avenged,' &c. still saddens my heart. Yet there are many righteous, I trust, among us.

Ever, my dear Muncaster,

Yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His expectations were not disappointed. Before the House met he received a message from the Duke

of Cumberland, by Mr. Robert Thornton, that the Duke of York has resigned; "wishing to know whether I mean to push any further steps, &c.— Thornton says, 'the Duke of Cumberland told him the King and all of them extremely angry at me.' Yet what could I do as an honest man short of what I have done. Bankes's motion acquitted the Duke of all personal corruption, but prayed for his removal, declaring he could scarcely have helped suspecting what had passed; and though Canning made himself merry with this, I am well pleased with it on reflection. It expresses a very common state of mind, especially in the case of a man, who does not think much, and is loose in his principles."

As soon as the House met on Monday, he "heard from Perceval the formal statement, that the Duke has resigned. Lord Althorpe's motion acceded to, noticing the resignation, and no further proceedings now necessary."[9] But the effect of these disclosures long agitated the public mind, and a breath from any quarter was enough to raise the troubled waves into a storm. Lord Castlereagh was first attacked for bargaining corruptly for a seat in parliament. On this motion Mr. Wilberforce was "long doubtful; but at last decided to vote against it, as too severe to turn him out for such an offence. Henry Thornton and Babington against me, Grant with me."[10] He voted in the majority of 49,[11] which negatived Lord Archibald Hamilton's resolutions; and three days later, reports that the "Burdettites are trying to stir

[9] May 6. [10] Diary. [11] Ayes 167, noes 216.

up a flame about Castlereagh's not being condemned by the House of Commons; but (N. B.) he owned his fault frankly and humbly, so did all his colleagues; and it rested in intention, and never was an act."

In the midst of these political contentions, the morning of the 3rd of May presented to him a more grateful sight. His views in joining the Bible Society have been explained already; and giving others credit for that pure spirit with which he was animated, he saw in its anniversary a "grand" and pleasing spectacle—"five or six hundred people of all sects and parties, with one heart, and face, and tongue." But this was only a moment's calm amidst the troubled scenes in which he was compelled to take an active part. "I want more time for reflection, and consideration of political subjects. The times are highly alarming. The Duke of York's affair, and parliament's conduct in it, has infused a general jealousy of public men. The House of Commons has lost the public confidence; there is no man of such talents as to take the ascendency like Pitt or Fox. It would be worse to try to stifle inquiry than to prosecute it. Yet I see the people may be inflamed to madness, or at least to the most mischievous excesses and measures. Oh may He who rides in the whirlwind direct the storm for our good!" [12] On the day before this entry, Mr. Madocks had given notice of his "motion, charging Perceval and Castlereagh with interference in the election of Madocks for Cashel, and afterwards influ-

[66] Diary, May 6.

encing him to go out of parliament." The motion was debated on the 11th, when he, "Babington, Grant, Henry Thornton, all voted in the minority. The inquiry negatived by a vast majority, on the ground of its being the first step towards Parliamentary Reform. I said a few words, having been often up, but not being called upon till so late, that I could not speak more than two or three minutes. I feared the vote would be more injurious to the character of parliament than any other. But all the violent or rather decided partisans, both of government and opposition, very strong against us, on the ground of the unfairness of censuring what we have connived at, and what is generally known to exist. Still this ought not to influence our exercise of a trust."

He enforced these principles at greater length in supporting, on the 26th of May, Mr. Curwen's motion for Parliamentary Reform. After showing that, however explained, the prevailing system could not but offend men of strict principles, he referred to Mr. Pitt's position, that on grounds of policy it was important to separate the real enemies of corruption from those who made Reform a party watch-word. For himself however he took higher ground. "Sure I am that no country was ever the worse for adhering to moral principles."—"I was always a friend to moderate and temperate Reform: in my younger days I espoused it; though older now, and consequently more cautious, I can see no reason to doubt the propriety of that former opinion, or why Reform should

not now take place." Mr. Perceval's amendment to the Bill of Mr. Curwen led, upon the 9th of June, to a debate, in which he condemned the corrupt use too often made of the patronage of government. He had ever been jealously careful of his own independence, asking no personal favours of the minister, nor ever recommending to appointments, except on public grounds. But there were some cases in which, on public grounds, he felt bound to name the proper person for the office. "Ministers," was his avowed principle, "cannot possibly know the circumstances of remote parts of the country, and they ought to be highly obliged to those who will give them honest information."

One of these cases occurred exactly at this time, and his casual opposition to the government did not make him hesitate to recommend the fittest claimant for the vacant office. "Mr. Huskisson," he writes word to Col. Creyke, "entirely acquiesced in the place of Receiver-General being one which belongs to the manor of the member for Yorkshire, and received my recommendation just as he has always done those for other similar offices." Yet this application betrayed Mr. Canning, through his dangerous fertility in sarcasm, into an insinuation which deeply wounded Mr. Wilberforce. "The intimation was, that whilst I was opposing government I was asking a favour of them." This was just the sort of misrepresentation which was sure to wound him; and he felt at the moment "sadly discomposed." It was a time to try his principles. "These men of the world," he says a

few months back, "how resentful! Canning said to me significantly yesterday evening, he vowed vengeance against Bankes for his attack on him about the consulship." He professed a higher standard; and he acted up to it. When he had given undesigned offence, "I apologized," he says, "to Horner, I hope to the comfort of both, I am sure to my own"—and here when he was hurt, "My discomposure," he adds, "passed off, I thank God, and" (having replied to the attack while the gallery was cleared) "I spoke to him freely and kindly in private afterwards." Yet his honest jealousy of any stain upon his independence made one effect of this insinuation lasting. Though Mr. Perceval assured him, "If you feel the least scruple in consequence, in making all such applications to the Treasury as you have ever heretofore made, the effect will be, that government will be deprived of your testimony in favour of persons of whom your connexion with the county you represent enables you to form a much better judgment than it is possible for government to expect from any other quarter;" yet he resolved, as years afterwards he told a leading constituent who wished to secure his nomination, "to take no part except that of certifying, if consulted, and why—the imputation cast by Canning."

The session closed upon the 21st of June, and on the 5th of July, "cutting the cables, rather than regularly unmooring," he turned his back on London, and the bustle of politics, and with his whole family took possession of his last summer's quarters at East-Bourne. He brought with him as usual "an im-

mense mass of unanswered letters. They took me, and some besides, about three hours and a half looking over, sorting, selecting, and preparing for answering. My chief business at first must be to pay off these arrears; but I mean here to live with my own family, attending closely to their tempers and dispositions." The clearing off this accumulation was no slight task. "How much I wish always," he tells Mr. Macaulay, "when at such places as this, where, however, at present I have not a minute's leisure, though I am looking forward to it with hope and joy, that you and a few other friends were at hand, that we might have a little less hurried social intercourse! But so it is—may we at last enjoy this peace as well as love. It is a delightful idea of the future state, (may we realize it more,) that it is the rest which remaineth for the people of God." A few days later he writes to Hannah More, whom he had visited in April, and found, "after all her sufferings, (seven teeth drawn at once,) perfectly alive in spirits, though still in pain at intervals."

"East-Bourne, July 15, 1809.

"My dear Friend,

Your truly interesting letter is just arrived. I am with you at your festivity—a more truly glorious gala than all the Olympic or Isthmian games in the world. I quite rejoice you were able to make your appearance; and I trust, as you gain strength instead of losing it, that your complaints, obstinately as they have kept possession of your tormented frame, are yet

losing their hold on the main organs. What you say of the good Bishop[13] delights me: surely he was one of the most lovely of human beings; yet even he had his venomous traducers, and even death, as you will have heard, did not silence them all.

"As for the drawing, you have done the thing much more splendidly than I ever intended, but as it is done I shall carve for myself a little; and allowing the Earl of Harrowby, (do you know that far more than half of the nobility both of England and Ireland have been raised to their present elevation since I came into public life,) granting to my Lord H. I say the usufruct of the drawing, I shall retain the fee-simple of it, and hang it up as a memento of a scene I love so well. By the way, I am glad to see Harrowby in office, he is a very able man.

"We are all well, I thank God, though I have found myself more shattered than I was aware of. But as for relaxation! I have by my side four or five and twenty letters ready franked, and I owe sixty or seventy more; many of them old epistolary debts. When these are cleared away, I have several other old creditors to satisfy. Who should be here but Lady Crewe, whom I doubt if I have seen since 1783. I long to open to her. I find among other obligations I owe you for Cœlebs, is that of giving me a text on which to comment, an introduction for opening the way to discussions on the most important topics, which otherwise would be hedged out from access. By the way, I ought to have thought of asking you,

[13] Bishop Porteus.

does N. contribute towards the Somersetshire operations? If not, I really ought and gladly will increase my, I often think, too small contribution. I beg you will deal honestly with me here. The idea of spending all the summer at a watering-place, where one cannot have a solitary, contemplative walk without being thought sulky, is so little to my taste, indeed I may say to ours, that we have been looking round to find some furnished dwelling for two or three months. One or two I found which would have done, but I was asked £2 or 300 or more for them; and I believe we shall at last accept a very obliging offer Mrs. —— made to my wife, of lending us for a few weeks the parsonage, they occupying the while the curate's house, and we finding quarters for the latter's family. All this arrangement may as well however not be talked of: I only say all to you. I own my chief temptation was its being very near dear Cowper's favourite promenades. Indeed I hoped we should get a house in the very heart of them, but we must have furnished it, which for two months would have been too much.

"I must break off. Farewell, and believe me with kindest remembrances,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. Wilberforce."

From his present resting-place upon the Sussex coast, he saw the "gallant trim" of the unhappy Walcheren expedition. In some anxiety on public matters, he wrote to Mr. Bankes.

"East-Bourne, July 26, 1809.

"My dear Bankes,

Are you still in London, making up the weeks spent in the country in soldiering, or are you gone down again to Kingston Hall? Whether in Dorsetshire or Palace Yard, I am disposed to take up the pen to say a few words to you, the rather because I was disappointed in my hopes of seeing you before I came out of town. Neither you nor I are much disappointed by the melancholy issue of the fighting on the Danube, though we must deeply lament it; and I own I had begun to hope a little, though sorely against my judgment. Whither, and for what purpose, is our large army going? It never can be intended for a mere coup de main; though that employment of it in the first instance, in its way to some ulterior and more important purpose, may be very proper. But I am afraid it has been prepared and sent out, under a notion of Buonaparte's being confined with the bulk of his forces in the south of Germany, and in Spain, that we may therefore form such a nucleus of force in the north, as may draw after it as a tail the hardy population of all the German provinces; having time to organize, train, and discipline it into an efficient army. I am always very slow to decide on points of great importance, when I know I have but very inadequate grounds on which to rest my opinion. But I have learned to suspect that those who have more and better grounds, have not always sufficient. I have seen a sad propensity in men, when they have got a great army, to set it at work, even where the

prospect is not very encouraging, as being better than letting it lie idle, and rust for want of exercise. We really do not enough remember, that our proper arms are not military, but naval, and that these military enterprises are dreadfully expensive, at a time when our true policy undoubtedly should be, to husband our resources, and, if possible, adopt a system of warfare, I fear at least it cannot be peace, which we may be able to carry on for an indefinitely long period. I hope the desire of recovering Hanover has had no undue share in biassing the judgment of government; but who that remembers how courtly Fox became on that subject, can cast away all suspicions? I very well remember old Lord Camden's telling me, that when the King took him into his closet, and fairly gave himself to talking him over, he was almost irresistible.

"We are going on in a very quiet way here, which indeed was the object of the journey. I see so little of my family during the session, that it is only fair to give them a more liberal portion of my time in the recess. Our old friend Lady Crewe is here, and two daughters of Grant's, clever and well-looking young women. I shall be sorry, if the 'antic' himself does not arrive before we depart.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

On his birth-day he writes to Mr. Stephen—

"August 24, 1809.

"My dear Stephen,

To you, my kind friend, I may confess that this is my birth-day; and I was hoping and meaning to em-

ploy this morning (for my morning hours are always beyond comparison my best hours) in looking back 'all the way that the Lord hath led me these (not forty, but) fifty years in the wilderness.' I am sure it must argue great hardness, if I cannot go on with the sentence, and add, 'to humble me,' &c. It happens, however, that an unusual number of letters requiring immediate attention, and several of them immediate answers, have this day reached me. Mr. B. however may wait till to-morrow; his papers, and the course of conduct which the existing circumstances of his case render best, require a good deal of consideration. How often does it happen that the suffering which befalls us is the punishment of some former misconduct, though from its not being immediately connected with it, the sufferer himself overlooks its moral and judicial, or rather penal, quality! Poor B. will probably suffer from the presumption of his being in the wrong, which will be afforded by his irritable temper, and former impracticableness.

"O my dear Stephen, what a prospect does a view of the last fifty years open to me! But I must not trust myself now on that subject. Farewell.

Yours ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The offer of a quiet parsonage near Cowper's haunts fell in exactly with all his inclinations. "I always observe," he would often say, "that the owners of your grand houses have some snug corner in which they are glad to shelter themselves from their own magnificence. I remember dining, when I was a young

man, with the Duke of Queensbury, at his Richmond villa. The party was very small and select—Pitt, Lord and Lady Chatham, the Duchess of Gordon, and George Selwyn (who lived for society, and continued in it, till he looked really like the wax-work figure of a corpse) were amongst the guests. We dined early that some of our party might be ready to attend the opera. The dinner was sumptuous, the views from the villa quite enchanting, and the Thames in all its glory—but the Duke looked on with indifference. 'What is there,' he said, 'to make so much of in the Thames—I am quite tired of it—there it goes, flow, flow, flow,, always the same.'" "What a blessing it is," remarks Mr. Wilberforce, this summer, on meeting an acquaintance who could not be happy out of London, "to have a taste for simple and virtuous pleasures! Religion gives this, but some have it naturally." He possessed it strongly, and enjoyed, therefore, exceedingly this "Cowperizing summer." [14] "Noûs voici," is his first address to Mr. Stephen from the neighbourhood of Newport Pagnell. "We arrived here last night, having left Battersea Rise after a prolonged breakfast. There we took up our abode from Tuesday evening, and enjoyed the society of many kind friends, whom Henry Thornton had asked to meet us; inter alios, Mr. Knox, of Ireland, of whom you must I think have heard me speak, and his friend the Rev. Mr. Jebb. The former is a man of great piety, uncommon reading, (uncommon both in quality and quantity,) and extraordinary liveliness of ima-

[14] See Life of Hannah More.

gination and powers of conversation. He is really well worth your going over on purpose to talk with him. He was once, strange to say, Lord Castlereagh's private secretary. He is the very last man I should have conceived to have gravitated to Lord Castlereagh."

To Lord Muncaster he thus communicates the place of his retirement.

"Near Newport Pagnell, Sept. 1809.

"My dear Muncaster,

——And where is Wilber? I hear you saying. Near Newport Pagnell! Out comes Cary, and the inventive genius and geographical knowledge of the young ones are set to work; but I defy you all. The truth is, I had been long looking round for a ready-furnished house for a few weeks. Not being able to find one, I carried my household to our old quarters at East-Bourne, and there I should have been glad to continue till November, but for its being so fully peopled that I could not walk out without being joined by people, my only connexion with whom arose from our inhabiting different numbers in the same row. I wished to pass a little time as much as possible with my family, of whom I literally see scarcely any thing during the whole session of parliament. Really too, though summer by the calendar, it has been so like winter by the weather, as to prompt me rather to look for some snug hiding-place, than to bask, without sunshine, on an open shore. I therefore am come inland, calling first to spend a day with the Speaker, whom I

left contrary alike to our own feelings, and his kind pressings to stay; and then halting for five or six days with Henry Thornton, where I carried Mrs. Wilberforce and my six children to the same house in which were now contained his own wife and eight; but which he and I once inhabited as chums for several years, when we were solitary bachelors. How naturally I was led to adopt the old patriarch's declaration, With my staff I passed over, &c. and now I am become two bands! Thence we came to this place, where I inhabit the house of a friend, who having failed in his attempt to hire one ready furnished in the neighbourhood, has kindly lent me his own. It is the parsonage, and he occupies the house of the curate, who is now serving another church, and whom I provide with a temporary residence.

"I must own that from my earliest days, at least my earliest travelling days, I never passed a parsonage in at all a pretty village, without my mouth watering to reside in it. And this longing has been still more powerful since the only objection, that of solitude, has been removed, by my bringing my own society along with me. The best of this place is, that though the immediate neighbourhood has no other beauties than those of peaceful rural scenery, yet we are near the scene of Cowper's rambles; and, devoted as I am to Cowper, the idea of treading in his track is not a little delightful. It is quite classic ground to me, and I shall read both his prose and his verse here with a double relish. I have once already, (but the day was bad, and I mean to do it again,) carried some cold

meat to a venerable old oak, to which he was strongly attached. I have been to see Stowe with my charming young friend Bowdler, whom I think I introduced to you in London; if not, I have yet to introduce you to a man who will one day I think make a figure. How much was I impressed with the idea of grandeur's not being necessary to happiness!

"My dear Muncaster, I wish we were within talking distance, I should have much both to say and to hear, but unless I had more time at command I feel no comfort in beginning upon political subjects. Oh! it is a gloomy sky, but there is a Sun behind the clouds. In one particular I quite agree with you, in ascribing all the great events which are taking place to a higher hand. Indeed He is always the supreme Agent, but there are times, and this seems to be one of them, when His arm is lifted up, and His hand displayed with more than common plainness. This consideration administers the greatest comfort to my mind. For being persuaded that there are many among us who still love, and fear, and serve the great Governor of the universe, I cannot but hope that, though justly deserving the vengeance, we shall still experience the mercy of Heaven.

"I found Mr. Worgan still lingering about Clapham Common, and was delighted with his performances. His music gratifies not only the ear but the soul. You and yours are all well I hope.

Believe me ever, my dear Muncaster,

Yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Mr. Worgan was soon added to their country party, "taking his meals, but not sleeping under our roof." Legh Richmond's neighbouring parsonage supplied a piano forte; and "music generally in the evening" was added to the other sources of his pleasure. Here he thoroughly enjoyed himself. His arrear of letters was discharged; and he was commonly safe from interruption. "A civil invitation from Whitbread civilly declined," secured his quiet. One evening only he laments as wasted, by some visitors "who staid late, and I, expecting they would go after an early tea, did not propose reading aloud, so the evening passed away in sadly unprofitable and most wearing chat. Finding my spirits worn, I took up Burke's pieces—Letter to the Duke of Bedford—to refresh. Christians should understand each other better than to waste time so." Mr. Richmond was almost his only neighbour, and him he occasionally met with freedom and pleasure. "Dined at Richmond's. His old mother there. It is just twelve years since he became serious from reading my book on Christianity, lent him by a brother divine, who said, 'I am no reader,' and begged him to run it over, as he did in three days. He showed it me in the original cover." This naturally added to the pleasure which he always felt in seeing the interior of a well-ordered parish. He attended with delight at a cottage reading, amongst many of "the people in their common working clothes;" and he adds that "Richmond, who is a most affectionate, warm-hearted creature, has made great way in Turvey. Every

body favours him, and God has greatly blessed his preaching."[15] "Of Olney I hear but a very melancholy account. It is indeed an awful instance of mercies slighted and privileges abused. I suspect also from what I have heard, that some of the former ministers of the place, like my excellent friend Mr. Newton, not being quite enough on their guard respecting dissenting, and Dissenters, has been not unproductive of evil."[16]

Here he could walk undisturbed in the solitary fields communing with God, or as he did "two mornings, reading Pope and Horace, and getting his Odes by heart; had quite forgotten them, but found them easily regained." A little more exertion carried him to Cowper's Weston Woods. "I wish you were a horseman," writes a distant friend, "that I might go and see them by proxy, and hear from you what the place resembles; but your feats of equestrianism are confined to your septennial ride into the Castle Yard; so there are no hopes of your getting into Cowper's classic ground." He had far more activity and spring of body than his appearance seemed to indicate, and twice already had he made this excursion. In this unusual quiet, "reading much, correcting the Practical View for a new edition, and much with" his "family," the weeks passed happily away. "Oh what a blessing it is to be living thus in peace! Surely no one has so much reason to say, that goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Never was any one so exempted from suffering,

[15] Diary. [16] To William Hey Esq.

so favoured with comforts. Oh that I were more grateful!"[17]

Mr. John Bowdler's sketch of this time of peaceful harmony is so happily expressed, that though it has appeared in print already, it will be read again with pleasure.

"I arrived here last Saturday morning at breakfast-time, having been kept by Mr. Wilberforce much longer than I intended; but he is like the old man in Sinbad's Voyage—woe be to the traveller that falls into his grasp! It required a considerable effort to disengage myself, and I have promised another short visit on my return, which will be greatly to my inconvenience and delight. Mr. Wilberforce, I think, enjoys his parsonage as much as possible: to say that he is happier than usual is being very bold; but certainly he is as happy as I ever beheld a human being. He carried me one day to Weston, and we wandered over many a spot which Cowper's feet had trod, and gazed on the scenes which his pen has immortalized. On another day we visited Stowe—'a work to wonder at,' for we were still in the land of poetry, and of music too, for Mr. Wilberforce made the shades resound to his voice, singing like a blackbird wherever he went. He always has the spirits of a boy, but" here "not little Sam himself can beat him, though he does his best."[18]

Yet this was no season of indolent recreation or mere idle enjoyment. Whilst he thanked God for "this wholesome retirement," he was most anxious to

[17] Diary. [18] Bowdler's Remains, i. 106.

turn it to the best account. "O Lord," he prays, "direct and guide me, so as to make my residence here a blessing to me." And he watched as well as prayed. "Laying out" his "plans so as to secure time for evening devotions, emptying" his "mind of business and literature;" examining himself whether his "mind had wandered whilst reading the responses or the psalms in church, or during the singing of praises to God;" and reminding himself, "that if here I find not my mind ungovernable, yet that this is a most favourable situation: all about me favourable to holiness, except that I commonly find literature more seductive than any thing. I should then be striving for the habit of heavenly-mindedness, that I may maintain it in more worldly scenes and societies." Here therefore, as well as in the crowded life of London, he could exclaim upon his Sundays, "O blessed days these, which call us from the bustle of life, and warrant us in giving up our studies and our business, and cultivating communion with God."[19]

Some days too he set apart in this season of retirement for more entire devotion to religious offices; and then, with such a measure of abstinence as his strength allowed, he gave the day to prayer and meditation. Deep at these times was his unfeigned humiliation, as he searched out before God all the suspected corners of his heart, condemning himself —for "selfishness, though I do not pass for selfish, and am not allowed to be so; Lord, increase my love to others"—for "ambition, or rather worldliness,

[19] Journal.

but ill cured, often bubbling up and breaking out, though my judgment I trust does not allow them, and though I am ashamed of them"—for "want of love, of real caring for my fellow-creatures"—for "want of delighting in God. Alas! can I say that I find more pleasure in religious meditation than in literature, which always presents itself to my mind as an object of gratification?"[20] Then too would he note down the remembered sins of long-past years, feeling he had gained his end when he could add, "How does this review, in which my own mind fixes on specific objects, shame me! How should I be ashamed if others could see me just as I really am! I often think I am one grand imposture. My heart is heavy; oh, there is nothing that can speak peace to the wounded spirit but the gospel promises—and the promise is sure. God is love; and is able to save to the uttermost, and He will cast out none who come to Him. He it is I trust who has excited in me a disposition to come, and I will therefore press forward, humbly indeed, but trusting to His mercy who has promised so many blessings to them that seek Him. O Lord, yet strengthen me, and, if it please Thee, fill me with all peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Amen."

At times too there are bursts of more than ordinary joy. "I humbly hope that I have felt this day, and still feel, somewhat of the powers of the world to come. I feel indeed the deepest sense of my own sinfulness; but blessed be God for His gracious promises. To Thee, O Lord, I humbly devote my-

[20] Journal.

self; O confirm me to the end. Make me perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle me. O præclarum illum diem." "What cause have I for thankfulness! Which way soever I look I am heaped up with blessings, mercies of all sorts and sizes. I wish not to spend time in writing, but, oh let me record the loving-kindness of the Lord."

In the midst of this life of quiet, his ordinary political cares startle us with their unwonted sound. "I opened the papers this morning to see if there is any confirmation of Buonaparte's madness; for I cannot but think it conformable to the providence of God, to manifest thus His ability in a moment to pull down the lofty from his vain-glorious throne, to confound the wisdom of the politic and the plans of the crafty. Lord Castlereagh and Canning fought a duel early on Thursday morning. What a humiliating thing it is! In what a spirit must our national counsellors have been deliberating! Lord Harrowby writes me word that Grenville and Lord Grey are sent to, with offers of treating for a joint administration. 26th. I think Lord Grey and Grenville will not come in with the present men."[21]

A letter to Mr. Bankes, written on the second of October, turns upon these subjects.

"Near Newport Pagnell, Oct. 2, 1809.

"My dear Bankes,

I am prompted to scribble you a few lines, partly to inquire after you and yours, and partly to

[21] Diary, Sept. 23.

elicit in return some of your sentiments de republicâ. Not, I fear, that they will be of a much more agreeable colour or quality than my own; but it is gratifying to exchange groan for groan when one can do no better. Of the late expedition I know not what to say. You and I think much alike of Lord Chatham; we can scarcely differ as to the particulars in which he would be well, and in which ill, qualified for his command. Primâ facie, and previously to receiving any private information, I must say, that having seen every minister without exception commonly fail most egregiously in their expeditions and diversions, (I am grown really to hate the words almost as much as another which is forced on us, I need scarcely say, coalition,) it is more natural to impute the failure to the framers of the plan than to its executors; supposing I mean that there is blame some where, for it is possible that there may not. One point is clear, that there ought to be some great advantage in view from keeping Walcheren, considering the expense at which it seems likely to be held, and an expense in the article in which we can least of all bear to be extravagant. Then this strange hurricane of the elements of the administration. Could you have conceived any men's being so absurd, to say nothing of higher motives, as to make the public exhibition afforded by Castlereagh and Canning. I can only account for it in the former, to whom as the challenger it is nine parts in ten most probably to be ascribed, by his Irish education and habits. Manent adhuc vestigia ruris. I wish the

King would declare that neither of them should ever serve him again in a public station. That would effectually prevent the spreading of the example.

"I cannot wonder at Lords Grenville's and Grey's refusing to enter the present Cabinet, nor, to say the truth, do I regret it. Any thing almost is better than a coalition; and nothing is so likely to multiply expeditions, or to produce impunity for the most absurd. What, but its happening that both ins and outs were concerned in the Buenos Ayres expedition, prevented some public censure of that most monstrous of all absurdities?—deliberately attempting to conquer South America, or when hoping to induce the natives to declare their independence, to set about conciliating their favour, by sacking one of their most populous towns.

"With best remembrances to Mrs. B. and all the house, believe me

Ever sincerely and affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"Henry Bankes Esq."

He wrote again upon the following day.

"Near Newport Pagnell, Oct. 3, 1809.

"My dear Bankes,

I was quite vexed at myself yesterday, for having forgot, if you had seen the same account of the duel between Lord Castlereagh and Canning which I had, to call upon you to laugh with me on one circumstance; indeed it is actually true, that

when I had read the paragraph I thought of cutting it out and transmitting it to you, lest your paper should be less just to the party concerned. The particular to which I allude, and which made me laugh heartily, was that of Lord ———'s having picked up and carried off one of the pistols, which one of the parties threw away after having fired it, and his gardener the other (like master like man). I was so forcibly reminded of your successful baiting for Sir W. Pulteney, that you naturally were entitled to a share of my amusement. But you perhaps have not heard as much as I had done of the noble Earl's provident parsimony, which indeed went beyond parsimony, for it not only made him take care of what was his own, but keep a sharp look-out for that which was another's. If this be so, the trait would not delight you as much as it did me.

"By the way, my newspaper to-day states so positively that I know not how to doubt its being right, that the duel arose from Canning's having, unknown to Lord Castlereagh, obtained the Duke of Portland's promise, to ask the King to remove him, and having sat with him in Cabinet several months en ami, without letting Lord C. know his intentions. I must say, if this be true, as stated, it was monstrous ill usage, and a course of conduct which I can scarcely see how any thing would justify, though I would keep my mind open, till I should have heard what Canning could say in his vindication. Tell me what you know, as far as you are at liberty. Of course I will observe any injunctions of

secrecy you may impose. With kind remembrances, I am, my dear B.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"Henry Bankes Esq."

Upon the 20th of November, his quiet Buckinghamshire quarters were again exchanged for the neighbourhood of London, whence he soon after wrote to Mr. Babington.

"My dear Tom,

* * * * * * * *

I have kept out of, or rather I have not been forward in getting into, the way of my political friends; and I am at this moment a little discomposed by a very friendly invitation from Perceval, to fix a day for dining with him. Stephen sent me an account of the part Perceval had taken in the late Cabinet broils, and I really thought that no blame was imputable to him. He never knew of the intrigues for turning out Castlereagh till after parliament had risen, when . . conceiving that the consequence of Castlereagh's being made acquainted with what was depending would be his immediate resignation, which, as the expedition was on the point of sailing, he conceived would be highly injurious to the public; under these peculiar circumstances . . he became party to the concealment, until the expedition should have come to some issue. He declared however formally in a letter to the Duke of Portland, against the con-

cealment which had been practised. I own that as far as Castlereagh is concerned, I think Canning has made almost a satisfactory defence; but the reflection which forces itself on my mind throughout the whole transaction is, that the public interest seems to have been forgotten by almost all parties.

"I really felt a good deal for Castlereagh, till I found that the challenge was sent, not, as I had conceived, from the impulse of the first angry feelings, but after having chewed the cud of his resentment for twelve days. This, with the consideration that in that time he must have learned that Canning was not so much in fault as others as to the concealment, makes the challenge appear a cold-blooded measure of deliberate revenge, prompted by the resentment arising from Canning's having shown, that he thought lightly of his talents and powers, and thereby degraded him in the public estimation. The duel was evidently in part the expression of this revengeful anger; in part, an expedient for restoring him in some degree to his level, and putting him in good humour with himself, as a man who had obtained satisfaction for the insult.

"As for the present government: the King by our constitution has a right to appoint his ministers; and if the Walcheren, and even far more the Spanish, expedition are put out of the question, I see nothing in the Cabinet, such as it now is, which forbids its being entitled to a fair measure of parliamentary confidence. I can truly say that, Earl Grey only excepted, I think these men superior in ministerial talents to the other set. Grenville, though an excellent second, is not a

sound-headed man, and he is very obstinate. Windham is certainly a drawback from the value of any ministry, unless he can be kept in order. Earl Grey I value very highly indeed as a public man. Now take the present set. Perceval, Wellesley, Lord Liverpool, Ryder, are really all sensible men; and of Perceval, with all his faults, I think better than of any of the rest. But they will greatly want parliamentary speakers; and yet it is sad work that we should take measure by the false standard of oratory, as to the fitness of men for ministerial situations: it was excusable in the commonalty of Athens, but is scarcely so in the British House of Commons.

"But I must say two things before I conclude. First, if Perceval deemed it material for the public weal that there should be a mitigation of our parliamentary contentions, and all the other benefits of a broad-bottomed administration, the junction ought to have been proposed to Lords Grenville and Grey in the mode most likely to insure the acceptance of the proposal, that is, it ought to have been made by the King himself personally. I am persuaded that the King might have prevailed on them to unite. I even hold that they could not have accepted the offer as it was made, without appearing too eager to get into office. Yet I have never doubted for a moment Perceval's sincerity in his offer to the two Lords. His eminence was not of his own seeking. Secondly, If the regular opposition (excluding the democrats) would consent to abstain from systematic opposition on the declared ground, that the public danger is such

as to call on us to dismiss all party objections and hostilities for a time, I should prefer it greatly to a coalition. Coalitions are odious things, and lead to the dissolution of all principle, and the loss of all credit, in public men; and surely it is a shame that it should be necessary to bribe men by the offer of good places to wave their party altercations. But satis disputavi. Farewell. With kindest remembrances,

Ever affectionately,.

W. WILBERFORCE."

He could not long be quiet within a mile of Hyde Park Corner. Upon the 7th of December he "went to Perceval's and talked with him for half an hour: he gave me a parcel of papers for previous consideration. Perceval owned, on my asking, that he had offered the Chancellorship of the Exchequer to R. Milnes. He and Ryder joined in defending it."[qq] Soon afterwards he "dined with Perceval; who very kind and good-natured; and pleased me more than ever before by his speech about not exciting a spirit against America by having the story told, lest government should be forced to exact too much." "My time," he tells Mr. Bankes, "was never more fully occupied when parliament was not sitting; foreseeing that when the House should meet, I must almost renounce all private society, I have been both giving and receiving a most unusual number of visits." These brought before him a most miscellaneous set of characters—from "Lord Sidmouth, who dined tête-à-tête, and

[qq] Diary.

much political talk with him," to "a missionary going to the Namaqua country," and "poor W. who declared most seriously that he liked spiders better than my dinner. 'Spiders are very good food;' and looking round the corners of the room, 'You have no spiders here,' as much as to say, I would soon convince you if you had—a singular man—appears a strong predestinarian." "General Miranda[23] dined with me, and his Mexican friend Dr. Constancio, and Bowdler. Miranda talked all till half-past eleven, and still untired—very entertaining and instructive, but used God's name lightly, else all his sentiments and positions just, humane, and even delicate; as his refusing to bear arms against Spain." "Mr. and Mrs. D. dined with us, and Robert Grant—got Babington to spare us Bowdler for the sake of promoting religious conversation. I did not profit enough. How has she been spoiled by the world; by admiration and popularity!—once very promising." "R. M. dined with me—evidently a disappointed man—of great talents; yet not quite equal to scaling the walls and trampling on opposition."

But though mixing more freely in society, he did not forget to watch carefully for the improvement of his time. "Back with Bowdler," he says, "by about eleven o'clock. I must guard against suffering my time

[23] This acquaintance he had formed long before, when Miranda had been employed by Pitt and Dundas, (as the latter expressed it,) "to *insurge* South America." He now renewed the connexion with a view to Abolition objects. From the Caraccas, General Miranda wrote to him next year; "the Slave Trade had been abolished in the province of Venezuela previous to my arrival, and I find the feelings of the people of this country very congenial with your philanthropic sentiments."

to be frittered away before going to, and after coming back from, town; to have occupations always ready, suited to my different states of animation and understanding." This high sense of the value of time led him to watch so carefully over his conduct in society; and though probably unrivalled in the happy art of leading conversation to the most improving topics, yet he was often little satisfied with his attempts. Thus he says, after giving a "dinner to Lord N. and I. H. who chatted till late; Lord N. a strange twist; I fear the evening was sadly mispent. No efforts to improve the opportunity and impress them aright. When in my closet, as now, I feel a sincere desire to do good to others, and to embrace occasions for it; but, alas! when in society I am too apt to lose the sense of God's presence, or possess it feebly and faintly, and I do not try to turn the conversation, and practise the company regulations which I have made. 'Lord, quicken me."[24] "I have a vast multiplicity of objects soliciting my attention . . . and I seem to myself to be failing in the discharge of the duties of my several relations, as member of parliament, as father, and as master. To Thee, O God, I fly, through the Saviour; enable me to live more worthy of my holy calling; to be more useful and efficient, that my time may not be frittered away unprofitably to myself and others, but that I really may be of use in my generation, and adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour. I long to carry the plan through for lessening the number of oaths—for reviving the Proclamation Society;

[24] Diary.

but I am a poor, helpless creature, Lord, strengthen me."[25]

"Alas! how little time have I for private devotions, or Scripture reading and meditation. I must either give up having so much company and so many friends in the house, or I must leave them, so as to render hospitality and their society compatible with the measure of spiritual exercises which my constitution of soul requires. The last alternative surely is right; but if on trial I find it needful, I must give up society as the right hand or eye, which it is my peculiar duty to cut off or pluck out. But, O Lord, quicken me. I have been hearing an excellent sermon from Simeon, on Aaron's death, pressing towards the close on torpid believers; alas! alas! to me that name belongs; but blessed be God it need not belong always; Thou hast declared that Thou wilt be found of them that seek Thee. To Thee, O Lord, I fly; O forgive and receive Thy unworthy wanderer! O come and dwell within me! Alas, how forgetful am I of the presence of God; and thence of my company and conversation regulations! Yesterday evening I fell into the vice of evil speaking. O Lord, fill me with love, with brotherly kindness, and grateful humility. How thankful should I be for my signal privileges, and how candid and tender in speaking, or judging, or thinking of those who have been destitute of the advantages I have enjoyed! If they had possessed my advantages they would most likely be far superior to me. How shocking is it to think that

[25] Journal, Dec. 24.

now for twenty-four years I have been seeking after God, and that my progress has been so little! Yet, O Lord, I would humbly hope that though I am weakly and feeble, yet that Christ is knocking at the door of my Laodicean heart, and that I shall open the door and admit my heavenly visitant. O Lord, rouse me effectually, and make me an active, zealous, fruitful Christian; let me beware of getting into the way so forcibly described by Owen, as a trade of sinning and repenting. Oh most blessed promise, I will give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely! The main spring having thus been set flowing, may it water every distant branch, and may I fulfil the duties of all my various relations—as M. P., master, acquaintance, &c. now so ill performed. Oh how little have I adorned Thy doctrine; and yet how much better do people think of me than they would if they knew me as I really am! Lord, do Thou completely sanctify me. Amen."[26]

Upon the nearer approach of the session, he expresses again to Mr. Bankes his views of politics.

TO HENRY BANKES ESQ.

"Near London, Jan. 12, 1810.

"My dear Bankes,

In one view you are better off at Kingston Hall than I at Kensington Gore. You are out of invitation distance; whereas I am rather annoyed by cards to dine with this minister and with that. With

[26] Journal, Jan. 7, 1810.

one of the Right Honourables this very day, after fighting off several others, I am going to feed; but I shall not hold that eating bread and salt with him forms a compact of political support as well as of personal good will.

"I wish you may come up the day before the meeting, for if, as is said, opposition mean to make a powerful attack in the shape of an amendment to the Address, I should like to confer with you about it before the last half hour. There are some men (would there were more of them in parliament—only not thick and thin party men) from whose general principles one may anticipate pretty confidently how they will act in given circumstances. It is no compliment to you to say that you are of the above number. The administration, as those whom the King has appointed, are entitled to a fair measure of support; and I must say that comparing them in point of natural talent and political wisdom with their opponents, I see in them no inferiority to the former. That our affairs have been most shockingly managed is I fear most true. However it would be very unjust to condemn without inquiry. For inquiry I think there is sufficient ground; yet looking back to the last administration's expeditions I must say, that so far as I am informed, the most absurd in conception, and the worst planned as to execution, was that to Buenos Ayres. Then if we go further back into Pitt's times, when more was really to be expected from Lord Melville's good sense, method, diligence, and energy, (for I should expect from Windham's

expedition just the result which took place,) yet how wretchedly did we fail, except where we were to operate chiefly by our navy, or where success was to be indirectly owing to our navy, as in the case of West Indian Islands, &c. But I must stop.

Believe me, my dear Bankes,

Yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

An inquiry by the whole House into the expedition to the Scheldt was voted, in spite of the opposition of ministers, within three days of the opening of the session; and of the secret committee appointed to examine confidential information, he as usual was a member, though "Perceval objected" to him, "as not enough of a party man to overbalance oppositionists." Notwithstanding his favourable inclination to the ministry, he had "become very obnoxious to their warm friends from having so often opposed Perceval."[27] This he never did without reluctance; but he could not swerve from that independent course which he had maintained even when a younger man, and the friend of Mr. Pitt. Where he could do it conscientiously, no fear of misconstruction prevented his supporting them. On the 16th he "spoke for Lord Wellington's pension, though" he had come to "the House doubting, and much disposed to go away; but my judgment convinced. It will however be very unpopular."[28] But on this mismanaged expedi-

[27] Diary. [28] Ib.

tion he felt strongly, and upon almost every motion opposed the government. For a short time during the progress of their debates, he was absent from the House.

"Kensington Gore, Friday, Feb. 9, 1810.

"My dear, kind Stephen,

Your friendly importunity, with that of Mrs. W., has decided me to stay away to-day; which will enable me to absent myself from the Speaker's dinner to-morrow. A degree of fever seems to hang on me, though only at times, and I fear if I were to plunge into the beehive to-day, I should experience the same sensations I did yesterday. I really feel your tender solicitude for me most deeply; I thought of it one night when I lay awake, with, I hope, thankfulness to yourself, and to a gracious Providence which has given me so affectionate a friend. I particularly wished to attend to-day to hear Sir Samuel Romilly on capital punishments, a subject on which I believe I agree with him, and indeed I must say I commonly like the spirit of his law better than that of his opponents. Do be so good as to tell him why I am not at the House, and how much I regret it; and to Mr. Yorke also, of the secret committee. Farewell.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

On the 12th of February he writes to Hannah More.

"Near London, Feb. 12, 1810.

"My dear Friend,

I have been indisposed with a fever and sore throat for a few days past; not seriously, I thank God, but sufficiently to keep me from the House of Commons. I am now returning to service again in moderation. The subject of our present discussion is a very painful one; and indeed I fear the lives and health of our brave defenders have been far too little attended to, in the various branches of military preparation. You must have read the surgeon-general's examination with no little indignation; I think I must send for Miss Sally's perusal Cobbett's last number, in which he gives Mr. Windham a most hearty flogging. All this might be vastly well; but the tide is rising, the wind, though from a distance, is roaring, and by and by it will blow, and the waves will beat with unexampled violence from every quarter of the compass; yet here are we gay and witty—vide Cowper's Table Talk, and the lines, 'Fix the slave's collar on, and snap the lock.' I must break off. No tidings yet of this poor young Eden. What a stroke! Farewell. Kind remembrances.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

This tedious inquiry (suddenly interrupted on the 27th, "by the interlude of that mad bull Fuller—never surely such a scene in the House of Commons"[29])

[29] Diary.

lasted six weeks longer. On the 5th of March he was at the "House till three in the morning, on Lord Chatham's 'private statement,' and voted against ministry, in the minority."[30] At length, upon the 30th, "the Scheldt business" was "finished. House till eight in the morning—much time lost in divisions —I voted against opposition's strong resolutions of censure, but could not say the plan was justifiable, or acquit of all blame."

A more stirring question followed. "I spoke late on Burdett's business, and was one instrument in putting it off, on the ground that Adam, Romilly, and others declared themselves not to have had time to make themselves masters of the case."[31] Upon the 5th of April the House resumed its consideration of Sir Francis Burdett's letter. "Sat till near eight, and voted Burdett to the Tower—I for reprimand."[32] The grounds of this opinion he again repeated on the following Tuesday, when "Sir Francis Burdett's letter was at last condemned, nem. con. I pressed unanimity, and had some influence on Perceval; both he and Whitbread conceding a little."[33] "I cannot forget, sir," he then said, "the effects which I have seen follow a reprimand from the chair when the levity of the offender had aroused the Speaker's indignation. 'You are committed,' was his censure of the Sheriff of Middlesex,[34] 'to his Majesty's gaol of Newgate, there to be confined with the common felons, of whom the law made you the

[30] Diary. [31] Ib. March 28. [32] Diary. [33] Ib.

[34] Reprimanded for admitting fictitious votes.

appointed guardian, but of whom your own misconduct has made you the associate.' The impressive censure of the chair sent away the offender lowered, penitent, and even in tears." On the intervening Sunday, he "heard shocking account of riots. —Sir Francis Burdett not yet taken to the Tower. Kept my mind free from politics all day, and I thank God comfortable."[35] "What a fermentation has poor Sir Francis Burdett excited, and he thinks no doubt he is doing his duty. Oh how different is the spirit of the gospel, how different the frame and tempers of the spirits of just men made perfect, from those of his adherents! Lord, whatever scenes are opening upon us, do Thou graciously guide and protect me, and may the proofs afforded of the instability and perturbations of all human things, produce on me the blessed effect of detaching me more from this world, both in my judgment and affections, and of fixing them more on heavenly things."[36]

Upon the third of May he once more took part in these discussions, urging upon the House the rejection of the Middlesex petition, and speaking as he thought "more easily and pleasantly than for a long time, almost for years." He was now again in the full current of sessional business, public and private; and though he tells Lord Muncaster,[37] that he "found himself less equal to the incessant wear and tear of constant parliamentary attendance," yet he gave himself to it with all the energy of youth, spending often the whole week in his Westminster lodgings.

[35] Diary, April 8. [36] Journal. [37] May 18.

This was little to his taste, for no man more loved domestic happiness. "Waited on," he says at this time when returning unexpectedly, "with the most kind officiousness; my dear children also glad to receive me; how thankful should I be for such a home!" But he complains, "I have a heavy arrear of unanswered letters and postponed business. So that though, I thank God, I have been uniformly well, I get no time for serious study, whether reading or thinking over important topics, of which I have many to be considered—Criminal law for Sir S. Romilly's and Windham's discussion, New South Wales, Penitentiary Houses, Foreign Exchanges, Henry Thornton's book; above all, besides the Charity Donation Bill as changed, the Trinidad Registry Bill, for which I must refresh my recollection of all West Indian topics and facts and circumstances."

All of these, with many others, pressed upon him as the session advanced. "How opposition thickens round Charity Donation Bill. Alas, how hard it is to do good! There are, I believe, some objections, but the good greatly overbalances. May 1st. Romilly's Bill—shameful House—they divided against Romilly, 33 to 31. Windham and Frankland suo more. I spoke, but very unsatisfactorily as to method, though some good hits. 5th. Wyvill breakfasted with me about Parliamentary Reform—Yorkshire meeting, &c. I strongly against it, and, strange to say, convinced him that a quiet written testimony better on all accounts. 14th. Calling on Canning about sinecures, and on Duke of

Gloucester about Trinidad. House till one and past—chiefly Tierney's motion about Duke of Brunswick—I in a minority of 86 against 103. Talked with Canning, and read his plan of sinecures—rejected—I in majority. Major Cartwright's 'experiment solitary' in petitioning. 15th. African Institution meeting—well attended—Duke of Gloucester, Brougham, Lord Headley, Morritt, Bootle, Granville Sharpe, and others. Settled finally to-day that I should bring in (or government by Order in Council establish) a bill for effecting the registry of slaves in Trinidad. Mentioned it to Perceval in the House this evening—he short—perhaps from being hurried. Bad way to speak to public men in such circumstances. 17th. Called Perceval's about Trinidad—told him that because dry last night. 18th. House till late—chiefly Catholic Question—Grattan's brilliant speech. I made a wrong attack on opposition—very hotly and sharply resented by Ponsonby. 25th. Windham dangerously ill, having had a dreadful operation performed. 31st. Off soon after breakfast about suppressing the sale of spirits to the Indians. House till three o'clock in the morning—beat government on altering sinecures to pensions for stipulated terms of service.

"June 1st. With Lord Selkirk to Rose, about spirits affair. General Miranda—dialogue—he most animated. House, Catholic Question, till four o'clock, morning. 2nd. Dined Lambeth—public day—large party of grandees and bishops. I had not seen Lord Chatham before, since breaking up—he very friendly and easy in manner. Windham still lingering—he re-

ceived the sacrament before the operation was performed. 7th. House till late on Captain Foskett's business. I thought it needful to stay, out of friendship to R. who had been conferring with me about it; yet forced to vote in the majority against Foskett."

From these various employments he was suddenly removed by an accident, which he describes in a letter to Lord Muncaster.

"London, June 18, 1810.

"My dear Muncaster,

The kindness which I have ever experienced at your hands assures me, that if you were to hear a loose report of my having been confined up-stairs for a week in a recumbent posture, you would become very uneasy till you should receive some authenticated report of my well-doing. You would, and you will nevertheless laugh heartily when you hear the whole story:—That playing at cricket with Mr. Babington, a ball struck my foot with great violence, and that by the positive injunctions of my surgeon, I have been ever since sentenced to a sofa. It will lessen the marvel, and render the tale less laughable, to hear that my son William was the main personage in the dramatis personæ of the cricket players, and I have not played with him at cricket before, for I know not how long. But here, as in so many other instances, I have abundant cause for thankfulness to the good providence of God; for Mr. Pearson (and there is not a more able surgeon in London) declares that if the ball had struck me an inch or two higher, and it is

very uncommon for a ball to come along shaving the ground as that did, it would almost certainly have broken my leg. I own to you, that when the accident happened I was tempted the more readily to concur with Mrs. W. in sending for a first-rate surgeon, on what appeared scarcely a dignus vindice nodus, by recollecting that it was said poor Windham's accident was a mere trifle at first, and perhaps if it had been attended to in its earliest stages, the bad effects might have been checked.

"Poor fellow! I really felt for him. He had some fine qualities, though I must own I did not rate him so highly as some persons did, except for conversation, in which I really think he was facile princeps, decidedly the most agreeable, scholar-like gentleman, or gentleman-like scholar, I ever remember to have seen. It is certainly true that he wrote to Dr. Fisher the day but one before the operation, to say that, the issue being doubtful, he wished to prepare for what might be the consequence in the most solemn manner, and therefore desired him to administer the sacrament to him. Sir W. Scott, who told me this at Lord Camden's, added, that he did receive it with the greatest fervour and emotion. * *
It is very remarkable, that with an imagination far more fertile and combining than any I ever knew, he never seemed to allude to any Scriptural facts or ideas. Burke did continually.

"It has often struck me how soon in public life people are forgotten. With all the feeling for poor Windham, and I really believe there was a great

deal, he will soon have vanished from the view of all but private friends, thrust out from the mind by the topic of the day. Farewell for the present, and believe me,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Upon the 16th he was "still on the sofa, unable to set the foot to the ground, but carried down-stairs. Friends dined with me to-day — Lord Sidmouth, Speaker, and Mrs. Abbot; Pinkney, American minister; Mr. and Mrs. Grant, Lord Teignmouth, and General Calvert. A pleasant, rational day. Speaker and Lord Sidmouth very entertaining; latter sat till near twelve, and chatted with me. Proposition made to him for being the key-stone to form a broad administration, combining both Castlereagh and Canning; but he declined, thinking there could be no cordiality, and that the exhibition discreditable. He is right if they two included."[38]

He much feared that he should not again reach the House of Commons before the prorogation. "It is a great disappointment to me; but I hope it is the indication of Providence that I am to be quiet." But on the 20th, "having the Sheffield Address, loyal and constitutional, and well signed," he "resolved to present it, and so was carried to the door of the House, and limped to the Treasury Bench. I had prepared myself for a speech of an hour of closing advice, and useful parting admonition, but there not

[38] Diary.

being above forty or fifty members, and as the appearance would evidently have been that of going cold-bloodedly to make a formal speech, I had not nerves for it; yet wishing to say something, I could not abridge well."[39] One object of this parting speech was to enforce the reasons by which he had been led a month before[40] to vote for Mr. Brand's motion on Parliamentary Reform. He enters upon this subject, in replying to one of his constituents[41] who had spoken of the "general disinclination of reflecting men to any change in the representation," and had lamented that so short an abstract of the speeches of the member for Yorkshire should be given to the public. "This," says another, "is the more to be regretted, because many who like myself have no time to read all the debates, look on any interesting subject for your speech, on which to ground their own opinions." "I have seen," Mr. Tennant continues, "a gentleman who was in the gallery on the 28th inst. The account he gives me of your speech, the force with which it was delivered, and the attention with which it was received by the House, causes me to lament exceedingly that your constituents cannot be made much better acquainted with your view of things."

Mr. Wilberforce replies—

"My dear Sir,

I feel in their fullest force all the remarks you make on the effect on my character, credit, influence,

[39] Diary. [40] May 21. [41] Thomas Tennant Esq.

&c. which are likely to be produced by the accounts which almost all, or rather I believe all the newspaper reporters too commonly give of my speeches in parliament. This is a subject on which it may seem almost indelicate for me myself to speak, but to the ear of a friend I may declare, that often when I have taken a material share in any discussion, and a long report is made of the speeches of other members, especially of those who are favourites with the newspaper editors, reporters, &c. all that I have said is entirely omitted, or at best very little indeed inserted. But this is not the worst; sentiments are often ascribed to me, not only different from those which I have expressed, but directly opposed to them. All this arises in part I doubt not from inadvertency, &c.; but I own to you, that after seeing how systematical this treatment of me is, I cannot but impute it to the circumstance of my not belonging to any party, on which account I am obnoxious to both, and to their writers, who are commonly among the most violent of their partisans. I hope some of my constituents who have heard me at York, may do me the justice to believe that I do not really utter the nonsense which is often put into my mouth; but I am persuaded that, nine times in ten, readers forget the allowances with which newspaper reports of the language of independent men ought to be read. I can truly assure you that on various occasions I have been restrained from speaking at all, by recollecting how much what I should say would probably be misrepresented. This was the case in part, in the very instance to which

you allude, that I mean of Mr. Brand's motion for Reform in Parliament. Yet I confess to you, that I afterwards blamed myself greatly for having remained silent, because it was impossible for me not to be greatly misconceived; since, in truth, the vote in which I concurred, and from which alone, as I did not speak, my sentiments were to be collected, gave a very inadequate and even erroneous view of them. I should have gone away without voting at all, because I neither liked to support Mr. B.'s motion for a committee nor to oppose it, but that I knew I should subject my character to very severe, though they would have been false, reflections, if I had retired without taking part with either side.

"I have not time now to enter into a full discussion of this most important question of Parliamentary Reform, and I should not do myself justice if I were to state my opinions on it partially. I must however assure you, that so entirely and fundamentally do I differ from those who speak in disparaging terms of the state of our constitution such as it now exists, that it is from the admiration and love which I feel for it, my sense of its excellence and of the unequalled blessings it dispenses, that I am chiefly decided (not, I own to you, without some diffidence, yet on the whole with a clear preponderance of judgment) in wishing for a very moderate and temperate change in the representation. I repeat it, I cannot now go into the argument. Thus much only let me state to you, that it must be remembered, the principle of representation is the vital principle of the House of Commons;

and I own to you, that judging both from speculation and experience, I am afraid lest the existence of such boroughs as four or five are, and their manifest inconsistency with the representative principle, if ever the public mind should happen to be heated on this subject, should produce so strong an impression, as to drive men to go lengths and adopt measures, which might have the most dangerous tendency. It is in fact these four or five boroughs to which I allude, that give to the violent Reformers the only plausible ground they have to stand on; and this being taken away by a moderate Reform, (such for instance as that which Mr. Pitt last proposed, or one considerably short of it,) all the really well-affected would detect and separate from them. I well remember that great man, not many years before his death, laying down this principle as one of the best and most valuable of all political maxims, that where it was at all practicable, nothing was so wise as to separate the well-intentioned from those who at the bottom had dangerous designs in view.

"From what I have said you would almost anticipate what I stated in the House of Commons the day before we rose, that I was one of the most moderate of all Reformers; and in fact, that conceiving a Reform would some time or other take place, I wished we were well through it, being persuaded it was a measure of which it might be truly said, that the danger of going too far was far greater than that of not going far enough, and that now, when I really believed the well-disposed part of our

country was rather against than for the measure, was just the period when it might be adopted with the greatest safety, because with the least danger of yielding to any wild and dangerous speculations.

"But I forget my resolution to abstain from the discussion, and I am detaining both you and myself too long. Let me not however conclude without expressing my joy at finding among my constituents so many who admire and love as they ought our unrivalled constitution. Have you seen the testimony borne to it by an American gentleman of great ability, in a pamphlet lately published on the genius and disposition of the French government, which he contrasts with those of our own. I have been longing to see it well abridged. Indeed I really have had thoughts of abridging it myself, together with another by the same author. I have scarcely left myself room (and I fear another half sheet would make my packet too heavy) to assure you once more, that I feel most deeply the friendly kindness which prompted your last letter. Believe me, in return, with real esteem and regard,

Yours sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"To Thomas Tennant Esq."

These were his fixed opinions on the question of Reform in Parliament. "All seems quiet now," he complains this spring, "but how little are men aware of the real dangers of the country! How little do they look forward to our probable state fifteen or twenty years hence!" His words seem almost pro-

phetic of that storm of political excitement, in the midst of which the Reform Bill was at length carried through. How full may be their accomplishment, our children will best know. The same opinions are thus expressed to Mr. Hey.

" My dear Friend,

* * * * * *

I should injure myself if I said that I deserve as severe reprehension for our silence as you do. For though I know that you have as many demands on your time as myself, you have more time to answer them. Oh how do I wish that I could secure, as you do, a few quiet hours before the world breaks in to interrupt and harass you! But I hold life by a different tenure. My crazy tenement is not composed of such materials as yours, or so put together. You are disappointing us, by not fulfilling the expectations you excited in your southern friends by your last visit—that now you had begun your travels, they would be every year or two continued. I must insist on it, for one, that you either come or write; appear, as Lord Kenyon would have said, in his alliterative fashion, aut pennâ, aut personâ.

" I know not whether Mr. Cookson may have informed you that I had felt a strong desire of making my devoirs to my Yorkshire friends, in the form of a Letter to my Constituents; and I believe the execution of my design has been chiefly prevented, by week having stolen away after week, till it has become too late for me to set about such an undertaking.

" My object would have been in part to justify my-

self; but in part also, and I hope still more, to render some service to the public. It is so many years since you and I exchanged a word on the question of Parliamentary Reform, that I cannot call to mind with precision your arguments. But I wish that you would coolly estimate the danger to be apprehended from keeping our representation exactly in its present state, under all the circumstances, actual and probable, of this country, and at the same time consider the benefits to be derived from having taken away those broad blots, which supply the most powerful and operative plea for reforming the state of the representation, at a period when there was no danger of being hurried into extravagant and precipitate excesses. But I am much pressed for time, and cannot therefore even enter on the discussion of such a subject. It often shocks me, and excites fearful presages of future evil, to see my countrymen so easy, and cheerful, and confident in the midst of circumstances which, as I think, might well produce alarm. But I must break off. Blessed be that gracious God who has so long continued to us the unequalled blessings we enjoy! It may be that He will still bear with us. I beg my kindest remembrances to all your family. My youngest child has been ill, but is nearly well again. I overflow with mercies!

Believe me, my dear Sir,

ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

CHAPTER XXIV.

JULY 1810 TO JULY 1811.

Garden at Kensington Gore—Barham Court—Herstmonceux—Attention to his children—King's illness—West Indian topics—His practical rules during the bustle of the session—Death of friends—County business—Lord Sidmouth's Bill concerning Dissenters—Cambridge installation—Conclusion of the session.

"THE session closed on Thursday," is the last entry in the month of June, "and now a long reach of time is before me, uninterrupted by parliamentary business. I have still, however, several matters to wind up, which have been delayed by my accident and confinement. O Lord, how thankful should I be that no bone was broken, or greater mischief done! I have not now time to write, but I go to prayer. I mean to spend a day in serious exercises as soon as I have cleared away my epistolary debts. May God direct me right, and enable me to grow in grace. I fear that I shall not be able to live here in quiet; if so, I must move. The command of my time is the grand desideratum with me during the recess. I am meditating a letter to my constituents, to diffuse prin-

ciples of thankfulness, moderation, and acquiescence in moderate Reform."[1]

The garden at Kensington Gore was one of his great sources of pleasure, when his time was at his own command. During the sitting of parliament, he could "never get there sufficiently early, or stay there in the morning long enough, to witness the progress of the spring;"[2] but now that he had somewhat more leisure, whenever the weather made it possible, he sat long, both writing and with his books, under a spreading walnut-tree, which was known amongst his children as his study. "Pretty quiet to-day—went out and sat under walnut-tree, where now writing. I should like much to stay in this sweet place, amidst my books, if I could be quiet."[3] "We are just one mile," he tells an American correspondent,[4] "from the turnpike-gate at Hyde Park Corner, which I think you will not have forgotten yet, having about three acres of pleasure-ground around my house, or rather behind it, and several old trees, walnut and mulberry, of thick foliage. I can sit and read under their shade, which I delight in doing, with as much admiration of the beauties of nature (remembering at the same time the words of my favourite poet, 'Nature is but a name for an effect, whose cause is God') as if I were 200 miles from the great city." But in other respects he was less favourably circumstanced. "My situation near town produces numerous visitors,

[1] Journal.
[2] Letter to Lord Muncaster.
[3] Diary.
[4] To John Jay Esq. July 18.

and frequent invitations, difficult and painful to resist."

These interruptions lasted as long as he remained near London; so that he could often only write his letters by stealing to a den at the "Nuisance" (a small adjoining house which he had purchased); "and even there I should be no more safe, if it were known that I had such a lurking-hole, than a fox would be near Mr. Meynell's kennel." "Sir Alexander Johnston, Dr. Buchanan, and Mr. Todd Naylor dined with me quietly. Much interesting talk about East Indies, and Brazil, and Ceylon—they sat till late."[5] "Mr. Vaughan at prayers, and staid till half-past one, on the hard case of poor Soren, who ruined by having saved a transport and full three hundred British soldiers from perishing. Dined at Perceval's—mixed party—Pinkney American minister, Attorney-General, M. Montagu, and others. Good-natured in Perceval to ask me, considering my differing so much from him. A sweet-tempered man; he commonly bears all ——'s strong speeches, but for Pinkney's sake, kindly corrected some to-day." "Perceval is really a most generous creature, with many most excellent qualities. Poor Johnson called to-day.—Perceval merely seeing an account of his claims and merits for services in New South Wales, which had been sent [by me] to the Duke of Portland, and left in the office, actually gave him unsolicited a living of above £200 per annum." "To African Institution, last meeting; Duke of Gloucester

[5] Diary.

in the chair. To Secretary Ryder's office about a poor convict. To Perceval, who was out. I saw Charles Yorke, First Lord of the Admiralty, who promised naval force, in consequence of our hearing of Slave Trade proceedings." "Whilst at family prayers this morning, there appeared in the verandah General Miranda and his two Caraccas deputies, come to settle terms of friendly connexion with this country—countenance of one very peculiar; they staid till half-past twelve." "Marquis Wellesley called, and sat with me, and walked in the verandah three-quarters of an hour, talking about Abolition cause in Spain."

All these were important objects; and even the time spent in society was far from wasted. "Young Lady N. ascribes her serious sense of things to meeting me two years ago. Oh what cause have we for ascribing all to God, who can use any instruments! I fear I was sadly negligent about her and the others. Not being watchful for others' souls, is one of my greatest standing faults; and, O my soul, guard against being deceived by the mistaken judgments passed on thee by others! How strange is it, that though we know them to be mistaken, we are often liable to be impressed by them! I really do not remember having had any serious talk with her." Yet he longed for greater quiet, and soon afterwards withdrew into the country. He moved first to Barham Court, and thus describes his visit.

"July 25, 1810.

"My dear Muncaster,

So soon as I was well on my legs again I repaired to my worthy old friend, Lord Barham's, and

found both him and his place in high preservation. Of the latter you have heard me speak. It has none of the grand features of your northern beauties, but for the charms of softness and elegance I never beheld a superior to Barham Court; and there is the utile with the dulce, for the most perfect specimen I believe in England of the ferme ornée has been also one of the most profitable of farms. But my good old friend himself is the most extraordinary of all. We suppose he is about eighty-four, and the accounts I have received would make him more. He goes on just like any other man of forty or fifty. He answers his letters regularly after breakfast, then takes his ride, and looks about his farm, and employs himself till dinner. At half-past four in the afternoon he takes as long or as short a walk as you desire; and what surprises me most of all, when he comes in, he reads two, three, or four hours till bed-time, without the slightest appearance of drowsiness, in whatever publication the discussions of the day render interesting. I must add, though I have detained you so long on this topic, one trait most highly to his honour, that when he was managing Lord of the Admiralty for Lord Chatham who was at the head, for above a year he never went to Barham Court although only thirty-two miles from London, though he loved it then, as he still does, with all a lover's fondness; and was directing by letters, tables, &c. every operation of the farm in all its daily details.

"During my confinement from my accident, my being such a fair shot for all who had not much to do with their time, procured me incessant callers,

and my unanswered letters accumulated on my hands to a size that was quite terrific. I have only just (indeed not quite) cleared away the arrears. Have you read the Lady of the Lake? Like a good economist I waited till it should come out in octavo, but had I but tasted it before, though it had been folio instead of quarto, I could not without extreme difficulty have resisted the impulse to gratify my appetite for it without stint. Really I did not think that I continued in such a degree subject to the fascination of poetry. I have been absolutely bewitched. I could not keep the imaginary personages out of my mind when I most wished to remove them. How wonderful is this dominion over the heart which genius exercises! There are some parts of the poem that are quite inimitable—all that precedes and follows 'And, Saxon, I am Roderick Dhu.' I regret there not being so much of moral as in Marmion. I must break off—farewell. With kind remembrances,

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

From Barham Court he replied to some interesting questions sent him by Mr. Gisborne.

"Barham Court, July 11, 1810.

"My dear Gisborne,

I turn from my wearisome track along a dull and laborious epistolary course, to answer the call from Yoxall Lodge, whence every voice is always heard with pleasure. I must send you only my first

thoughts, and shall probably write more largely after some reflection. I cannot at all wonder at, or regret ——'s feeling the dispositions you mention. On the contrary, I should regret their non-existence. They become every young Englishman of good fortune and respectable connexions, and I heartily wish I may see him an active, useful member of parliament.

"As to the plan of obtaining for him what I may call the run of the Foreign Office, I own frankly to you that I do not conceive it likely to be attended with any benefit, except on the supposition, that the young man to be so placed would study in this way, and not otherwise. There is something, it must be confessed, in papers concerning real and depending transactions, in live papers if I may so term them, which makes them produce a more lively impression, and create a warmer interest in most men's minds, than such stale papers as may be read in print in one's own closet. Yet from these, if a man would really read them attentively, may be obtained all that can be got from the former, except perhaps a more complete acquaintance with the existing fashion, the mere technicality of the diplomatic correspondence of the day. I should say the printed documents were even to be preferred, because the best on every topic are commonly selected, without a great deal of useless trash. I scarce know how any young man could better prepare himself for either House of parliament than by studying, inter alia, the papers which have been laid before the House on the great events of the day; those, for instance, on Walcheren, the American,

and the Spanish affairs. One of the chief particulars which my mind includes in the inter alia, is Modern History, both of the continent, and still more of our own country; the latter of course to be read with the Parliamentary History and Debates. If I were not writing to you, who know, as well as I could tell you, all but what belongs to *the shop*, I should add, that above all I recommend composition on all the great topics.—Satis.

"With kind remembrances to all under your roof, I am always, my dear Gisborne,

Yours most sincerely and affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Early in September he took possession of an empty country-house, which the kindness of a friend had placed at his disposal. His own was lent at the same time, and he assured its inmates, "It is a pleasure to me that my house should be of use to my friends when I am away from it." "I always feel the more rewarded for the money I spent upon Kensington Gore, when my friends come to it freely, whether we are present or absent. For those who are occupying a friend's house in his absence, what so natural as to have another friend occupying their own? I only beg you will be in no hurry to quit."

As soon as he was well established, he thus makes Lord Muncaster acquainted with his "lurking-hole."

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

" Herstmonceux, near Battel, Sept. 25, 1810.

" My dear Muncaster,

I cannot be sure whether or not I have written to you within the last fortnight or three weeks. If not, you will scarcely be able to make out my lurking-hole. How much will you be surprised when I go on to tell you, that I am within a very few miles of the tremendous John Fuller. It must surely be a strange wild region that contains such inhabitants; some outlandish place beyond the bounds of civilized society, where 'sea-monsters whelp and stable.' Indeed, were not Mr. Speaker at a distance but little greater, I should scarcely feel secure within the reach of such a barbarian. But as it is said, that the fiercest animals feel an unextinguishable dread of the keeper who has once established his ascendency over them, so I trust to the effect of the recollection of the great wig, and repose in security. To explain—I am in a corner of Sussex, in an excellent house lent me by a kind friend, who from family circumstances is kept away from it for some weeks longer; and in a place almost as pretty as the neighbourhood of the sea ever is. Not that it is so near the salt water or so beautiful as Muncaster. There is a fine old castle here; a mere novus homo, however, compared with yours, having been built in Henry 6th's time, but it was in complete preservation till about twenty years ago; and though this is a very good private gentleman's habitation, yet when one sets it against a complete castle,

one side of which was 200 feet long, and which was in the complete costume of the age in which it was reared, it dwindles into as much insignificance, as one of the armed knights of the middle ages, fully accoutred, who should suddenly be transformed into the curtailed dimensions of one of the box lobby loungers of the Opera, or even one of the cropped and docked troopers of some of our modern regiments.' We have been here about three weeks; and I am striving to spend less time at my desk, both on account of my health, and that I may, when alone it is in my power, have a little time for reading to my wife and children. I wish you and yours could be of the party. But I can only wish it.

" Accustomed as I am to all the conveniences of a highly civilized state of society, I cannot without wonder as well as thankfulness call to mind, that here I am at one extreme of the kingdom writing to you in the other, and not doubting of conveying to you very speedily the tidings of me and mine, and of receiving from you the account of your goings-on, though secured behind the natural ramparts of your ninefold wall of mountains. O my dear Muncaster, we are not, I am sure I feel it continually, we are not half grateful enough for the blessings with which we are favoured; above all, for the spiritual blessings. I cannot help at times, giving way I will not say, but, at least, lending an ear to suggestions which arise in my mind, that our comforts will be abridged, and our pride be humbled. But I will abstain from striking this string, at least at present. Let me not excite

melancholy ideas in your mind. If I cannot be gay, let me at least be affectionate, and assure you, with kind remembrances to your young ladies, in which Mrs. W. would join if she knew of my writing, that I am ever, my dear Muncaster,

Yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Lord Muncaster's reply produced the following rejoinder.

"Herstmonceux, Oct. 23, 1810.

"You amused me, my dear Muncaster, by showing yourself at least as well acquainted with this place and its environs, as I was after residing here a month. You are right, at least substantially so; the castle is in the park, but, horrendum dictu! it was pulled down, and the bare walls and ivy-mantled towers alone left standing; the materials being applied to the construction of a new house, which on the whole cost twice as much, I understand, as it would have taken to make the castle habitable, for it had fallen a little into arrears. I don't know however that we who inhabit the new mansion may not have made a good exchange by gaining in comfort what is lost in magnificence; for the old building was of such a prodigious extent, that it would have required the contents of almost a whole colliery to keep it warm; and I think few things are more wretched, (of the kind I mean,) than living in a house which it is beyond the powers of the fortune to keep in order; like

a great body with a languid circulation, all is cold and comfortless.

"I see from the newspapers, that the Duke of Norfolk has been in your part of the world. Has he not been in your old castle? Not that you would much covet his visit. There is a strange anomaly, an utter unsuitableness, between Jockey of Norfolk and the peaceful dales of Westmoreland, the seats of peace, and love, and melody, which he would people with the throng of the vassailers in Comus. I hope that you yourself are enjoying the witcheries of your fascinating prospects. I quite long to revisit those much-loved valleys, and rocks, and lakes, and waterfalls. I think the longing has been increased by the perusal of the Lady of the Lake, which I have read with delight and wonder. I really think that from the place where Fitz-James first lights on the mountaineer, to the end of the battle, there has not often been a more spirited and interesting poem.

"My dear Muncaster, your kind heart will be sorry to hear that my friend Bowdler is going abroad for a milder climate, but we greatly fear too late. But for my being married, I have thought that I would go as his companion. He is really, take him all together, one of the most extraordinary young men I ever knew. If it should please God to restore him to health sufficient to enable him to carry on his profession, this will one day appear. But to those who love him as well as I do, it is an unspeakable comfort to reflect that he is, I believe, perfectly ready to make the great exchange. I often think what a change it is! what astonishment

will seize the minds of those whose thoughts have here been studiously turned away from all such serious subjects! My dear Muncaster, may we also be ready. My heart is very heavy. I know you will sympathize with me. God bless you and yours.

I am ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"My dear sir," was Mr. Bowdler's parting address to Mr. Wilberforce just before his embarkation for the coast of Sicily, "we shall probably not meet again for many months; and it may be the will of God, that in this world we shall meet no more. Let me assure you, that you and Mrs. W., and your little circle too, will be very, very often present to my thoughts, and never without feelings of the warmest gratitude and affection. The hours which I have passed under your roof have been among the happiest of my life; and I shall ever esteem the advantages and opportunities of improvement which I have there enjoyed, as among the choicest blessings which the mercy of a most merciful Father has showered on me. May the same bountiful Lord repay to you and yours tenfold all your kindness to me. I beg you to present my very affectionate regards to Mrs. Wilberforce, and believe me, my dear sir,

Most truly yours,

J. BOWDLER, JUN."

One main purpose of his summer retirement was to "watch the tempers and dispositions of his chil-

dren." "I mean," he tells Mr. Babington, "to make education my grand object. Pray for me, that I may be able to succeed. I can truly say I feel my own deficiencies." This was one great reason why, instead of visiting Yorkshire, he spent his summers in the south. "I can truly declare," he tells a county friend, "that even the inanimate objects which you daily behold, would gratify my friendly feelings. Few things would give me more pleasure than to stroll from Robert Broadley's garden (the fox, does he still maintain his station?) to the extremity of poor Tom Williamson's woods, both inclusive; but the difficulty, expense, and discomfort of moving children, and the evils and pains of leaving them, amongst other causes, keep me from any distant excursion. I often indulge the hope that, when my boys are gone to school, I shall be able to travel about a little; and in that case the haunts of my youth would not be forgotten." "We are about to quit our pleasant retirement," he tells Dr. Coulthurst, "pleasant, chiefly because it has been so retired, where we have been residing for almost three months. This occasional abstraction from the bustle and turmoil of the world, is highly beneficial to mind, body, and estate; and I have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with my own children, who, it really is not exaggeration to declare, seldom get a quiet minute with me during the sitting of parliament."

As he had not married until middle life, when he was most busily engaged in his engrossing duties, this was literally true. So long as they were

infants, he had not time to seek amusement from them. Even whilst they were of this age, it made a deep impression on his mind when one of them beginning to cry as he took him up, the nurse said naturally by way of explanation, "He always is afraid of strangers." This he could not suffer to continue when they grew out of mere infancy. During the session indeed he was so busy, and so much from home, that he could see little of them through the week; but Sunday was his own, and he spent it in the midst of his family. His children, after meeting him at prayers, went with him to the house of God; repeating to him in the carriage hymns or verses, or passages from his favourite Cowper. Then they walked with him in the garden, and each had the valued privilege of bringing him a Sunday nosegay, for which the flowers of their little gardens had been hoarded all the week. Then all dined together, at an early hour, in the midst of cheerful, yet suitable conversation. "'Better,'" was one of his Sunday common-places, "says the wise man, 'is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith;' but, my children, how good is God to us! He gives us the stalled ox and love too." Never was religion seen in a more engaging form than in his Sunday intercourse with them. A festival air of holy and rational happiness dwelt continually around him.

But with Sunday ended for the time the possibility of domestic life. "While the House is sitting I become almost a bachelor."[6] When the session was

[6] Letter to S. Roberts Esq.

over, and he had retired into the country, it was his delight to live amongst his children. His meals were as far as possible taken with them; he carried them out with him on little pleasurable excursions, and joined often in their amusements. Every day too he read aloud with them, setting apart some time in the afternoon for lighter and more entertaining books, (one of these this summer was the Arabian Nights,) and selecting one of them to read more serious works to him while he dressed. Happy was the young performer who was chosen for the office. The early and quiet intercourse which his dressing-room afforded drew forth all a father's tenderness, whilst the reading was continually changed into the most instructive conversation. "—— read to me Robertson's America whilst dressing, and we talked over it." "I shall never forget," says his son, "the happy expedient by which he impressed on me the characters of the several Spanish chieftains. When the prayer bell cut short our reading, he would bid me mark how its heavy tones chimed in with the epithets by which he had distinguished them. To this hour the sound of a bell irresistibly reminds me of his exclamation, 'There it is again, cruel Cortes, perfidious Pizarro.'" All his efforts were aimed at opening the mind, creating a spirit of inquiry, and strengthening the powers; while he was jealous of such acquirements as yielded an immediate return, and so afforded opportunities for gratifying vanity. Thus when he first heard a rumour of Feinagle's plans—"A foreigner," he says, "is in town who

teaches the art of memory so as to render children capable of surprising feats. I have not heard a particular account, but I suspect it is one of the ancient methods, of a house divided into rooms, &c.. But such mere technical plans are dangerous, especially for young people, as are all schemes which flatter vanity and indolence, give the power of shining at a cheap rate, and of exhibiting a show of knowledge where there is really none."

All this time he was watching carefully the indications of their various character; and many a remaining entry of the long-past incidents of childhood, show how observant was his eye of things of which he seemed to take no note. "—— a heavy-looking child, but showing at times much thought—used (in fact) in play yesterday Euclid's axiom, Things that are equal to the same are equal to one another." "—— has far more courage and character than all the other children." "Heard W. read to me for an hour after dinner one of Miss Edgeworth's Tales. How entirely free from religion is her morality, which however stolen from Scripture!" "Reading to children Robertson's History of America." "Stopped to buy —— a book, because he was good yesterday—having much wished to go with the rest; and though at first he cried, he almost immediately got the better of it, and desired (our driving off being a little delayed) to come and wish me good bye, which he did with a cheerful face. This deserves most serious consideration and suitable treatment." "—— behaved very pleasingly last night in relation to ——.

They were keeping ——'s birth-day, with their gala in the gallery, in my old court dresses; and in the midst of earnest entreaties to have my sword, and when it had been promised, he gave it up in a moment when I pressed that ——, having done mischief with it, though undesignedly, on the last birth-day, could not have one; and would be hurt by his having a sword, and himself being without it. How lightly things sit on these young creatures!" "The carriage has taken the children into the country to-day; they came home delighted. It is much to preserve a taste for natural and innocent pleasures."

The practical character of his personal piety was of the utmost moment in his treatment of his children. He was always on his guard against forcing their religious feelings, and shielded them carefully from the poison of Antinomian teaching. "With my family," he says, "twice to Basil Woodd's, because Dr. Hawker preaching at the Lock." "—— preached, morning. Sad Antinomian sermon, on 'There is forgiveness with Thee, therefore Thou shalt be feared.' He says he meant to speak of forgiveness as the act of God in His decree and purpose, not in the manner of His communicating it; what sad work!" "—— twice, still very doctrinal and unprofitable, reconciling his Calvinism with practical religion. How little the modern religionists think of the vices of the tongue, or even of bad tempers, much less of habits of mind! Alas, how much easier to make a profession of religion than to govern the temper!" In the same spirit he says, after receiving

a very promising account of one amongst his children, "I am afraid of ——'s making him artificial by telling him it is God's work on the heart. I fear above all his being led to affect more than he really feels." Yet with all this careful watchfulness, tenderness was the distinctive feature of his domestic character. Though he never weakly withheld any necessary punishment, he did not attempt to dissemble the pain which its infliction cost him. "Alas!" he says at such a time, "—— grieved me much to-day, discovering the same utter want of self-government or self-denial when disappointed of any thing on which he had set his heart, as he had done before. He behaved very ill. I talked with him plainly, and set him a punishment. Poor fellow! it made my heart heavy all the evening, and indeed ever since. But I hope he will mend. God will grant much to prayer; and I humbly trust it is our object to train him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

This careful observation of his children's characters, joined with the most lively tenderness, is beautifully illustrated by a paper of directions which he drew up about this time for the private use of two of his sons, who were now at school together.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND CONDUCT.

"Hints for my dear ——, to be often read over, with self-examination.

"1. Endeavour to bear in mind, that you will be often tempted to behave to your brother —— not so well

as you ought. That you may be on your guard against all such temptations—

" 2. Recollect, if you can, what the occasions are which have most commonly led you to behave ill to your brother, and try to keep them in your memory by now and then thinking them over; and when such occasions are about to occur, whether at play, in reading, or wherever else, then be doubly on your guard, and try to lift up your heart in an ejaculation to God, that you may be enabled to resist the temptation; and if you do resist it, lift up your heart again in thanksgiving.

" 3. Remember one season of temptation will always be, when you are at play, especially where there are sides, whether you are on the same side as —— or not.

" 4. Remember it is not sufficient not to be unkind to your brother; you must be positively kind to all, and how much more then to a brother!

" 5. Remember you will be under a temptation to resist unkindly ——'s disposition to command you. If Christ tells us not to resent little outrages from any one, (see Matt. v. 39, 44,) how much less should you resent his commanding you! Though perhaps it may be not quite right in itself, yet an elder brother has a right to some influence from being such. See 1 Pet. v. 5.

" 6. Often reflect that you are both children of the same father and mother; how you have knelt together in prayer; have played together as children, and have sat round the same table, on a Sunday, in

peace and love. Place the scene before your mind's eye, and recollect how happy mamma and I have been to see you all around us good and happy.

"7. You are not so lively by nature as he is, but be willing always to oblige him by playing at proper times, &c. though not disposed of yourself. Nothing more occurs to me, except, and this both mamma and I desire to press strongly on you, to desire you to be on your guard against being out of humour on a little raillery, and always to laugh at it; nothing shows good humour more than taking a joke without being fretful or gloomy.

"May God bless my dearest boy, and enable him to profit from the above suggestions of his most affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

BROTHERLY LOVE AND CONDUCT.

"Hints for my dear ——, to be often looked over, with self-examination.

"1. Endeavour to bear in mind, that you will be often tempted to be not so kind to your brother —— as you ought to be. That you may be on your guard against the temptations when they do occur—

"2. Recollect, if you can, what the occasions are which have most commonly led you to be unkind to your brother, and keep them in your memory by now and then thinking them over; and when such occasions are about to occur again, whether at play, in reading, or wherever else, then be doubly on

your guard, and lift up your heart in prayer to God, that you may be enabled to resist the temptation; and if you have been enabled to get the better of it, lift up your heart to God again in thanksgiving.

"3. Remember one season of temptation will always be, when you are at play, especially where there are sides, whether —— is on your side or on the opposite side.

"4. Remember it is not enough not to be unkind to ——. We ought to be positively kind to all, but how much more so to a brother!

"5. Remember you will be tempted to command him too much. Guard therefore against this temptation.

"6. Sometimes reflect that he and you are children of the same parents. Recollect him a little fat child, and how we used to kiss his neck and call him Bon. Recollect how you have knelt together in prayer with mamma and me, and how, especially on a Sunday, you have sat round the same table with us in peace and love. Try to place the scene before the eyes of your mind, and recollect how happy your mamma and I have appeared to see you all good and happy around us.

"7. I will specify the times and circumstances in which you ought to be peculiarly on your guard against behaving improperly.—When you have done your own business, or are not inclined to do it, beware of interrupting him in doing his.—When you are with older companions than yourself, beware of

behaving to him less kindly, or with any thing like arrogance.—When you are in the highest spirits, having been at play or from whatever other cause, you are apt to lose your self-government, and to be out of humour on having your inclination crossed in any way. Beware in such circumstances of being unkind to him.

"May God bless my dearest ——, and enable him to profit from the above suggestions of his most affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

These hints afford a fair sample of his mode of managing his children. He constantly referred them to the highest principles of action. Education indeed, when otherwise conducted, he always looked at with suspicion. "William Allen," he says shortly afterwards, "and Joseph Fox came about Lancaster's schools, to tell me all about them, and press me to be a vice-president. Heard Fox's most interesting account." For a fortnight he was doubtful how to answer this appeal; but having fully weighed the question, he "wrote to William Allen to decline being a committee man, though it gave me great pain to refuse him; but emulation and vanity are the vital breath of the system."

He was still at Herstmonceux, when "he heard of the death of the Princess Amelia, and of parliament meeting on the 1st of November, owing to the King's illness. He prepared immediately for his return to

town, which he reached upon the 9th of November. The day after his arrival he wrote to Mr. Babington.

"Kensington Gore, Saturday, Nov. 10, 1810.

"My dear Friend,

I think you know me too well not to be sure that a friendly salutation from one I love so well, and after so long a cessation of all intercourse, would not have waited till now to be returned, but for some unavoidable hinderance. The fact is, your letter found me in what has been called, you will say somewhat too strongly, all the horrors of preparing for the migration of the whole horde from a station which it has been occupying for above two months; and you are well enough acquainted with the manners of the leader of the tribe, to be aware of the quantity of baggage of all sorts, (well styled I have often thought by the Romans, impedimenta,) which in the course of that time, in the summer too when he can hope for a little leisure for study, he would heap around him. Under such circumstances, as I did not mean to begin the system of short letters till I should have answered you, just as the parliamentarians in Charles 1st's time were charged with guttling up to the throat just before they commenced their fast, I deferred taking up my pen till I could allot at least a quiet half-hour to you. Then on our way having received a very kind invitation from the Speaker, I thought it would be wrong for us not to accept it. Here we arrived safe and sound D. G. yesterday evening, and I have taken the first vacant season, this morning, for writing to you;

though various hinderances, an hour's talk with dear Stephen before his going back to town one of them, and a long discussion de rebus domesticis another, have made me so late that I shall not be able to enjoy as long a tête-à-tête with you as I intended.

"We spent two months in quiet at Herstmonceux; and I assure you, my dear Tom, I can truly say that you were remembered, not merely from the thoughts and feelings which are always expended on those we love, and for whose well-doing we are interested, but from my bearing in mind your good advice concerning the management of my children. Now for the expenditure of my time. It is but too true that my letters occupied far too large a proportion of it. It grieves me to be so unprofitable; and in particular, having as I conceive in my mind the materials of a work of no great length either, but, as I humbly hope, likely to be very useful, I quite long to begin upon it.

"When at Herstmonceux, we read with the children in the afternoon: we got through Clarke's Travels, and Robertson's History of America, and had begun the historical part of Charles the Fifth. I was much struck with the remarks which the little ones made on the passing scenes and characters, and I am disposed to think that it must be very useful to them to hear the reflections which we make both on the dramatis personæ, and on the principles of the author of the piece. I enter into all your domestic cares and joys. May God continue you His best blessings. Believe me

ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

All public business was deferred by the illness of the King, and the continual hopes which were held forth of his speedy convalescence. "Our beloved old King the physicians declare is recovering, and they have scarcely a doubt of his being even speedily well, if his restoration be not retarded by some of the circumstances, which if he were not a King he would not experience."[7] "Dec. 9th. The King getting better, but with occasional relapses. Perceval said on Thursday, that as well then as when Thurlow declared him well, and sealed the commission in 1789. I believe it. I remember that it was then said in private that the King was not quite well." These hopes were continually deferred, and the examination of the royal physicians before a committee of the House of Commons, (of which he was a member,) was the only public business which engaged him before Christmas; yet he was fully occupied. West Indian subjects now required a large portion of his time. Above a year before he told his connexion Mr. Manning,[8] "It has grieved me not a little to hear that the planters in the West Indies are not at all proceeding to make such improvements in their system as their new situation requires. I have often thought that it might do much good, if Collins's excellent work on the management of the negroes were generally circulated. It is astonishing how little it is known by West Indians of education and knowledge of colonial concerns. But the subject to which I wish to draw your attention, is that of an institution for the

[7] Letter to W. Hey Esq. [8] Oct. 18, 1809.

religious instruction of the children of the slaves. Depend on it, their education would operate powerfully to produce marriage, with all its happy consequences. The Bishop of London's society should be resuscitated. Could not the first stone of this second temple of Benevolence (if the late Bishop's be regarded as the first) be laid on the approaching 50th anniversary of the King's accession. Do, my dear friend, stir yourself in this good work. There are many reasons, which I need not point out to you, why I had better not appear in this attempt at all; or if at all, in the back-ground, at an almost invisible distance. But do press forward. There are many West Indian gentlemen in this country, whose private character and disposition encourage the hope of their co-operating in any well-devised plan for this purpose. All the Ellises are of this description; Barham pre-eminently so. I must lay down my pen. I wish I was within ear-shot of you, and tongue-shot too; for I would speak as well as hear."

To Mr. Macaulay he wrote at the same time, and expressed his "grief that the West Indians are not accommodating themselves to the new system. What think you of firing a pamphlet at them, to awake and alarm them? And yet if one were to advise specific measures, they would perhaps rather be ruined than afterwards adopt them. Then Stephen ascribes so much less than I do to the effects of encouraging marriage, &c. He however will, I trust, push his own improvements, through the medium of Trinidad." This last subject had engaged him all

through the former session, and with many others still continued to require attention. This department of his labours, may be best understood from a list drawn up early in December of the "subjects of action and deliberation for Abolitionists."

SUBJECTS OF ACTION AND DELIBERATION FOR ABOLITIONISTS. DEC. 3, 1810.

"1. To meet at some early time for the sole purpose of discussing the important question, whether any and what Bill ought to be brought into parliament this session, for amending and making more effectual the Act for abolishing the Slave Trade.

"☞ For points involved in this discussion see a separate sheet.

"2. To take into consideration the Portuguese Treaty, and suggest to H. M.'s government, what may be proper to be done or attempted towards correcting or improving its stipulations, in regard to the Slave Trade.

"3. To consider whether any thing and what can be done to engage the Spanish Cortes and other governing powers in Spain and Spanish America in the cause of Abolition.

"4. To investigate the present state of things between Great Britain and America in relation to this subject, and consider whether any treaty for reciprocally enforcing the Abolition laws of both countries, can under present circumstances be advantageously promoted, and by what means.

"5. To determine whether any and what part ought

to be taken by Abolitionists, as such, in parliamentary questions likely to arise as to the continuing restrictions on the distilleries, and other measures for aiding the sale and consumption of West India produce.

"6. To promote by all possible means restrictions and regulations, either by royal or parliamentary authority, for the prevention of the contraband supply of the conquered colonies with slaves.

"7. To concert measures and provide means for more speedily and effectually profiting by the disposition of H. M.'s government to place the Crown estates and slaves in the West Indies under a humane and beneficent management.

"8. To inquire into and bring to justice all offences against the Abolition Acts, in which governors and public functionaries are implicated, and herein especially the conduct of Governor ——, &c. At the same time to obtain, if possible, by legal means, the enfranchisement of the negroes unlawfully deprived of their freedom in these cases.

"9. To consider whether any and what remedy can be found for negroes brought in as prize, and restored to the claimants in West India courts of Vice Admiralty, and afterwards sold in colonies now under H. M.'s government, but who upon appeals have since been condemned to the Crown for the purpose of enfranchisement, pursuant to the Abolition Act. The late case of the Africa will here demand particular attention.

"10. To inquire whether any and what measures

ought to be taken for ascertaining the present condition and treatment of negroes apprenticed in the West Indies, or otherwise disposed of there, after condemnation to the Crown, pursuant to the Abolition Act. Herein the case of a cargo of slaves, condemned at Tortola, and taken by Admiral Cochrane as apprentices on his plantation at Trinidada, will demand particular notice.

" 11. To promote by all proper and necessary means the practical application at Trinidada, of the principles on which that new colony ought to be governed, and to give countenance and support to the friends of those principles on the spot against their opponents.

" 12. To watch over the case of Huggins, at Nevis, and the proceedings against his official abettors.

" 13. To take care that the Commission of Custom House agents, now going to the West Indies, is so instructed, &c. as to assist, and not unfairly prejudice, the cause of Abolition."

All this required much labour, and he incurred it freely. There were many services which, from his station, talents, and connexions, he could himself perform, and which could be intrusted to no deputy. Such was the exertion of a constant private influence with the heads of the administration, for preventing evils or redressing wrongs. Thus, upon the 6th, he was long " with Perceval, talking with him about Portuguese treaty, pressing him to get the 10th Article, about Slave Trade Abolition, altered." And after a visit to Lord Wellesley, he says, " I have been

to call on him to bespeak his good offices for the cause of Abolition in Spain. The men whom he will see, will probably go over to South America and there leaven the mass." "I am very much obliged to you for your suggestions respecting the possible interpretation of the 10th Article," Lord Wellesley replied to him at this time.[9] "I shall instruct Lord Strangford to invite the Portuguese government to a formal renunciation of any eventual rights which this Article might be construed to establish to a Portuguese Slave Trade on any part of the African coast, which is not now in the actual possession of Portugal." Mr. Stephen appreciated rightly the value of these services, and as his own ardent temper was capable of very few diversions from the great object to which he had devoted all his energies, ... "how manifestly is Stephen a special instrument in the hands of God in behalf of the negro race!"[10] ... he not unnaturally pressed upon his friend, that he should more confine his efforts to this one object.

"My dear Wilberforce,

* * * * * *

I send for your consideration a paper that may serve to show you how absolutely necessary it is you should resolutely *make* time to think and act on Abolition matters. It is hastily drawn up, and I doubt not an incomplete enumeration; and the title to be subdivided contains a whole host of toils and difficulties within itself. If better and clearer heads, and more disengaged hands, than mine, do not lead in

[9] Marquis Wellesley to W. Wilberforce Esq. Dec. 8. [10] Diary.

this cause; and if you, who *must* be the public leader, are to be only a battering-ram to be pushed forward, instead of a fore-horse in the team to pull as well as guide the rest, the cause is lost, the Abolition is undone. It will sink under the weight of your daily epistles; your post privilege will be the bondage of Africa, and your covers the funereal pyre of her new-born hopes. Millions will sigh in hopeless wretchedness, that Wilberforce's correspondents may not think him uncivil or unkind, and that no anonymous or unknown supplicant may have his individual tale, whether true or false, neglected. I really wish you were a little more like Mr. Fantom, (that I think is the name of Hannah More's reformer,) who disdained, in his grand projects of universal good, all petty objects of individual charity or duty. Why, if you were my Lord Wellington and I Massena, I would undertake to draw off your whole attention to my grand movements, and ruin your army unperceived, by teasing your piquets and burning a few cottages on your flanks. Away you would gallop to Coimbra, or any where else, killing your horses and yourself; and a poor aid-de-camp like me might fret his heart out with fruitless endeavours to call you back to head-quarters. But it is vain to complain. So things will continue, I know, and it is only making bad worse to take up your time with long expostulations. Read, however, and send me back my paper.

Yours, my dear Wilberforce,
ever very affectionately,
J. STEPHEN."

That of which Mr. Stephen complained, at times loudly, was in truth one of the most striking features of his character. Devoted as he was all through his life with so much patient perseverance to the deliverance of the negro race, his zeal for that great cause never led him to neglect any opportunity of doing present good. He was just as active in redressing individual wrongs, just as ready to assist the distress, and poverty, and friendlessness which surrounded his own doors, as to labour in the world's eye for the ill-used tribes of Africa. This, while it increased his usefulness, saved him also from that diseased contraction of thought and feeling which is so apt to grow on those who are identified with one pursuit. He was the very opposite of "Mr. Fantom." The healthy vigour of benevolent exertion was ever fostered in his mind by his mingling individual acts of kindness with all his general plans. Thus whilst he was "calling upon Perceval, and discussing with Macaulay, Stephen, Brougham, and others, about African and West Indian matters," he was also "off early to London to the War Office about the boy Nowell, unlawfully recruited;" and finding that "Lord Palmerston had not yet read the minutes of the second examination, which decisive," he went on "to the Colonial Office about the case of Marsden and a poor woman," getting home at last "too late for dinner;" and being "off" again next morning "after breakfast to the Horse Guards, where talked to Lord Palmerston about the poor boy," and got the necessary "orders sent down for his

discharge :" [11] and this is only a sample of a multitude of works of mercy in which he was every day engaged. And yet he could say in his most private entries, " Alas! I feel my uselessness and unprofitableness, but I humbly hope I desire to employ my faculties so as may be most for God's glory, and my fellow-creatures' benefit." It was this high motive which gave such uniformity to his conduct. " I hear," says his Diary, with beautiful simplicity, a few weeks later, " that I am likely to be popular now amongst the West Riding clothiers about poor Nowell, the boy falsely enlisted. How this shows that God can effect whatever He will, by means the most circuitous, and the least looked for. This might have a great effect in case of an election."

With the new year set in the full tide of public business. The King's illness was painfully confirmed, and the appointment of a regency inevitable. In these circumstances, the mind of Mr. Pitt's friend reverted naturally to the debates of 1788; and to the great actors in that drama who had left the stage before himself. His mind was constitutionally free from that fretfulness of spirit which too often imbitters such recollections, and his estimate of things was just and sober. " I believe," he tells Mr. Babington, from whom he had heard an instance of " Perceval's sweetness melting down Whitbread's rough churlishness, and extorting a eulogy for suavity and kindness," " that he is a man of undaunted spirit, but his modesty prevents his taking that high tone, which at

[11] Diary.

such a time as the present rendered Pitt so equal to the emergency."

On the 1st of January he was at the "House till about twelve. Romilly abusing Pitt. I got up and defended him. Did well for me, though desultory, not having prepared arranged speech."[12] "Without feeling the necessity of previous preparation," to quote Sir Samuel Romilly's account of what he said, "in the simple language of the heart he defended his friend's memory." "If my honourable and learned friend had enjoyed the opportunities of knowing that great man which have fallen to my lot, he would have been better enabled to do justice to his character. I am no worshipper of Mr. Pitt. I differed from him—with what pain none but myself can tell; but if I know any thing of that great man, I am sure of this, that every other consideration was absorbed in one grand ruling passion, The love of his country. Of his talents there can be, and there is, but one opinion; and with respect to his other qualities I can only adopt the words which those qualities provoked from the admiration of a formidable but generous rival, 'amicitia est sempiterna, inamicitia est brevis.'" The question was between keeping the whole household irremovable, or agreeing to the moderate opposition principle of a portion. "Report of Resolutions—I voted for the amendment." In the next debate there was "sad quarrelling work. Sheridan's long speech, two-thirds tipsy, dealing about knocks on all sides (after Sir William Grant, who quite

[12] Diary.

capital). He rather attacking me; and I prepared a very good answer for him, which over-persuaded not to speak. Canning declaring they must not (Foxites) abuse Pitt, or he must watch them closely. Then Sir Samuel Romilly defending himself, &c. Ponsonby reconciling; though Whitbread could scarce bear it. Heartily wished to lose, but upon constitutional principles voted for amendment, which carried by 217 to 214. Had been carried last night, but moved again by Perceval.

"Jan. 3rd. Last night, for the first time, at my lodgings. Morning, callers—Vansittart about West India commission, then others. House, when found unexpectedly objection to money issuing from Exchequer by auditor (Lord Grenville) without authority of the two Houses. So prepared by moving papers for debate to-morrow, and home. I am very doubtful if I should not explain in the House what was grossly misrepresented by Whitbread, though I trust unintentionally, but renewed last night by Sheridan, that I had said we ought to give Prince of Wales the least power possible for carrying on the government. I have been much vexed, but not liking to come forward on purpose, did not explain to-day. Manifest symptoms of Canning's rather making overtures to opposition. His speeches excellent, but not like Pitt's; rather exciting admiration than calling forth sympathy. 4th. House till half-past eleven. Opposition made no hand of it. Lords—sharp contest; government beat by three. I am quite grieved at their not recovering household resolution, which

lost by thirteen. 5th. I am pained by having voted against the Queen's having the household. I really fear it may hurt our good old King. Yet I acted from sense of duty. How toilsome and unsatisfactory a path is that of politics! How much more satisfactory is that of religion! Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace."

The notices of his Diary just sketch the conclusion of this business. "11th. The answers of the Prince of Wales and the Queen reported to the House. The Prince's highly objectionable. Though the powers committed to him more than in 1788, and the right of making peers almost alone withheld, he says, he is willing to use the powers left him for the public benefit; also talks of his care for the Crown, and in an equal degree for the welfare of the people—surely it must be his own. 14th. Callers, and a good deal bustled, till House—Phantom, as the cant phrase is, for the commission to put the great seal." When the question was further debated—"Sheridan's speech wretched, and Perceval's excellent. Yet, as on the other evening, all the newspapers make a capital speech for Sheridan, and extol his eloquence. Dined at Henry Thornton's—heard from Sharpe that the Prince intended to make a sweep as soon as possible, and after reading his oath, I do not see how he can do otherwise. Lord Grey to be First Lord of the Treasury. Grenville, who will not give up auditorship, and has lately, in his correspondence with Perceval, called it a check on the Treasury, has not I suspect nerves to stand the proposing a bill to make

the two offices tenable together, and for so short a probable time. Ponsonby, Third Secretary. Lansdown, Ireland. Surely Whitbread can never long agree with Lord Grenville. Brougham to be Secretary of Admiralty vice Croker. Surely infra dig. Horner to be Secretary of Treasury, a very good appointment." [13]

This was but the rumour of a day, and on the 21st he continues, "Very different reports about Regent's intentions. Sharpe's statement contradicted throughout. All acknowledge the talent, the spirit, integrity, good humour, and various excellences of Perceval through all the conduct of this difficult business. His colleagues don't help him at all.[14] 23rd. Third reading of Regency Bill. Forced up by Giles, and glad of an opportunity of speaking handsomely of Perceval." "31st. Whitbread's notice, that if no one else, he would take up the affair of Lord Eldon, acting for King in 1804, and using his name when King insane, attended by Simmons's men. Sad work, but a most difficult and distressing situation for an honest man to be placed in. The King they say now getting well—in private they say, well again now.

"Feb. 1st. Morning, letters—off by twelve, and by Dr. Thornton's—his lottery application to N. Vansittart. Meeting on Abolition enforcement law—Whitbread, Granville Sharpe, N. Vansittart, Brougham, Bootle, &c. Then House. No one knows what the Prince means to do, whether to change his ministers or not. It is said that Lord Grey and Grenville very

[13] Diary, Jan. 11. [14] Ib. Jan. 22.

indignant that the draft of an answer they had made to Commons (both Houses' address) was submitted to Sheridan and Lord Moira, and that the Prince did all but beg their pardon for it. 2nd. To Speaker's first levee. Lord Bathurst about four to-day believed they were all to go out; but Perry, the editor of the Morning Chronicle, told Stephen about half-past three, that he knew (he spoke as having been told from authority) that the Prince of Wales had examined the physician at Carlton House, as to the state of the King's health, and had determined against changing his ministers. Otherwise it had been decided, that Lord Grenville was to be the First Lord of the Treasury, in spite of his late letter to Perceval; that it would be three or four days' talk, and no more. I am assured that before the Prince determined upon keeping the present ministers, he sent to Mrs. Fitzherbert and Lady H. and that they both advised it. Feb. 6th. Off for town—sad bustle—meeting at Vansittart's—House adjourned—Speaker not being there, but at Privy Council, swearing in the Prince."

In the midst of this "bustle" graver entries intervene, and reflections which strikingly illustrate the calm and watchful temper in which he passed through its turmoil. "Lying awake long in the night my thoughts were not naturally so serious as usual, and my mind more disturbed by the rushing in of a great variety of topics. Alas! how much of my life is fumed away in trifles which leave no mark behind, and no fruit! O Lord, enable me to redeem the time better in future;

to live more on plan, though really this has been in some degree my object, and to be more devoted in heart and life to Thy glory, and to the good of my fellow-creatures." These were not the indolent desires of occasional feeling; strict practical rules grew out of them. "Let me try to keep myself reminded of invisible things by something which will call attention, though not produce pain, and by varying the expedients; when I grow familiar with one, I may use another. I did try a little pebble in my shoe. Why should such secondary means be despised? Oh that they were unnecessary, and so they may become by degrees! Oh may I learn to live above this world, and set my affections on things above!"[15]

"By being kept too late last night, I have lost a full hour of morning time. God forgive me! I put this down for my caution and guide. I must either go to my private devotions before family prayers, which is far the best when I have not an urgent pressure of business, or immediately after, which is next; and in that case I must see that I do not curtail the time in order to come in again. O Lord, help me to amend here, for I cannot expect Thy blessing when the very means of supplying all spiritual strength are thus broken in upon."[16] "How different do matters look at the time and afterwards! Last night I thought I ought to stay with our friends after prayers, which were late, and I had got no time before, having been writing necessary letters; but now I am clear I might have gone out for

[15] Journal, Feb. 10. [16] Diary, Feb. 16.

three quarters of an hour, and apologized on returning. My soul, remember this for use another time."[17]

"Friends dined with me, and staid too late—and though I brought out books and read passages, it was wasteful work. How foolish that people cannot understand each other better! What good done by this visit? How unprofitable was our intercourse, partly from want of topics ready for conversation! They would often remind me of useful subjects for discussion—yet last night I really was thinking how to do the young man good, but no aspirations—I am quite faulty here."[18] "Dined at the Speaker's—he very kind, and particularly obliging in his public attentions to me. Sat between Bankes and Sir John Sebright—latter a man of much energy in the pursuits he engages in, and many right dispositions, feelings, and opinions—very upright as a member of parliament. I tried to introduce some religious conversation, but I knew not well how. Alas! I was too much admiring and enjoying the splendour, &c. in itself. It is much the handsomest thing of its size I ever saw, and so say others who live in and see the most splendid houses; but how little did I keep my heart with due diligence! how little was I poor in spirit, the mortified, humble, meek servant of the lowly Jesus! Surely I was intoxicated with the glitter and parade, and too much like others. It must be good for me, who am called so much necessarily into social intercourse, to retire when I can to my own home and family, and give up as much as

[17] Diary, Feb. 6. [18] Ib. Feb. 8.

possible dining out—my health is a fair plea for it—it always suffers from late dining, though less I think than formerly."[19] "Dined first time at the Alfred—the party kindly made for me by Sir Thomas Bernard—Mat. Montagu, Lord Hardwicke, Sir Thomas Bernard, Lord Teignmouth, Master Simeon, Sir John Colpoys, Hammersley, &c. All went off very pleasantly. Sir Thomas Bernard's plan of an Alfred theatre by private subscription—no promiscuous admission—select plays and actors—ali'pour la morale. To consider it. Perhaps I spoke too freely about it—all cherished social affections, but, nonne, too luxurious—too much tending to lower down the frame to the world's standard, and unspiritualize the affections? I have no time now, but I will resume this. I should fear, in dining there often, both self-indulgence and counter-spiritualizing tendencies. How truly interesting is Sir Thomas Bernard! God bless him."[20]

"I find my memory failing me—partly, I doubt not, from advancing years; but this effect accelerated and exaggerated by the incessant bustle in which I have lived, and by my not taking pains to obtain sufficiently deep impressions. Let me mind this with my children, especially with any who may seem volatile and bird-witted. I have not been watchful enough over my thoughts, and for improving the time when going from place to place, either on foot, or in a carriage. Let me think over some topics with or without a pencil, and note down; or if I have no topic for thought ready on my memorandum paper, let me re-

[19] Diary, Feb. 9. [20] Ib. Feb. 16.

peat passages in prose or verse, which I wish to retain in my memory, either seriatim or topically. Let me have memoranda made to insure due attention to all my topics' stores. Oh how much better fitted I might have been, than I am, for the duties of my station, if I had duly improved my means, especially that most important of them all, my time! O Lord, forgive me—and let not vanity be my motive in all these operations, but the desire of pleasing Thee. Again, as my memory thus fails me, let me rather read over what I already know, since I can far more easily revive into completeness ideas now fading away, than put myself into complete possession of new ones. Again, in Scripture reading, especially at night, I find often after it only a general devout frame of mind, but no specific recollections; let me try to retain something distinctly, if only one verse—and repeat it afterwards—classification here of unspeakable use to a bad memory. Mem. To look over these papers frequently."[21]

Surrounding events also gave a graver tone to some of his reflections. "Got my letters in the evening, and informed of the death of my old friend Cookson, of Leeds. Quite shocked and stunned by it. There was no man upon whose death I had less calculated than his."[22] "Feb. 11th. —— took me aside and told me, that calling on Miss Smyth, she heard her father was given over by the physicians. He had had a cold about three weeks. She had only been told of his danger the day before, and shocked inex-

[21] Diary, Feb. 7. [22] Ib.

pressibly. I truly bewail the loss of so kind and steady a friend—so very partial to me; but I recollect with joy that I always dealt freely with him on religion, and I hope he was the better for it." "Feb. 20th. Heard lately of honest Miles Atkinson's death —a truly pleasing letter from William Hey conveyed the news. William sighs after a better world. Poor S.'s end awful beyond measure, all circumstances considered. He had just put his son into a most important post in the church, though he is said to be imbecile and incurably indolent. He was ill a fortnight, but his mind was so harassed with worldly affairs, that he would not pursue any medical advice till too late. I hear, that dining lately with a small party of contemporaries, he boasted that, in his own words, 'he should see them all out'—one was too fat, and another something else. His life appears to have been completely thrown away; yet he was one of the most sensible practical men I ever knew. Oh how easily can God confound the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent! What a contrast is Miles's death! meek, humble, and confident."

His hands were all this time full with his usual variety of public and private business. "Feb. 7th. Reading about Jeremy Bentham's Penitentiary plans, now I hope likely to be executed. 8th. Captain Manby with me about his manner of saving shipwrecked mariners—very clever and effectual. To speak to Rose about him. Called Thelwall's to speak to him about E——. Clever, but a coxcomb. L. break-

fasted with me—sent by Master Simeon. Introduced to me as having a plan for the public benefit. On receiving it, it is his own, though his plea the best possible. Feb. 22nd. Thank God, well again—calling at Colonial Office, about a schoolmaster for New South Wales. Found my name on a committee moved by Sir F. Burdett, on the case of Colville. 23rd. Off for Cold Bath Fields prison, where committee met to-day on Colville's case. Sir F. Burdett civil—Lord Folkstone kindly giving me a sheltered place, seeing me incommoded by the wind. 25th. Extremely hurried in the morning by different sets of callers on business. Off at three-quarters past eleven, for committee on Colville's case. Then letters. House—dined, and House again; but having been very poorly before, I now could not keep awake in House on Whitbread's charge against Lords Eldon and Sidmouth about King's illnesses in 1801 and 1804. Did not hear one-third of Castlereagh's defence, so that I came away without voting. I know how unpopular this is in the House; but it was the path of duty and conscience, for it was in truth as if I had not been present. But very middling in health just now. 26th. Babington and Henry Thornton voted last night with Whitbread—Stephen quite clear the opposite way. How candid should this make us! On reading the Report of the debate I am quite satisfied to vote against Whitbread. Various callers this morning until time to go to the Prince's first levee. The palace most splendid—an immense party—the Prince looks very large—little Michael Angelo in the room

as amicus curiæ. Afterwards to House, though I wished to attend Grant's summons, and meet the Weylands at dinner. Wardle's charge about Corporal Curtis—his charge in general futile, except that the punishment excessively severe (though Judge Advocate-General Sutton's speech excellent too). The House was manifestly any thing rather than a fair tribunal—evidently so delighted when any thing went against him.

"March 1st. To secret committee,[23] where long discussion, until, from talking over matters with a good-natured spirit, Sir Francis Burdett acquiesced in Report; and Lord Folkstone, on Report's being made, very handsomely said it had been unanimously agreed to. I got inserted in it a clause suggesting the impropriety of keeping men, when only meant to be detained, where subjected to other evils besides detention. 2nd. To town about Wakefield railroad. Found that W. Allen, who had applied to me about getting a licence for Paul Cuffee's[24] ship, had not seen Lord Bathurst, to whom I had written—went down to Council Office and prevailed on him to grant me a licence. He is to come and negociate with African Institution and government about settling himself and others in Africa." "5th. Read letters—a little writing till going out to offices. Three o'clock, Penitentiary Committee—eat a mere morsel, and House—Brougham's Bill for making Slave-dealing a clergyable felony. Not a voice lifted up

[23] About the detention of Mr. Colville.

[24] For an interesting notice of this remarkable man, a Massachusetts negro who by unexampled perseverance raised himself to affluence, see the Appendix to the Christian Observer for 1811, vol. x. p. 325.

against it; but the House rather cold on the subject, so that I could not press, as I wished, for compensating Africa." "Dined at the Duke of Gloucester's, to meet Mendez Lopez, Caraccas' ambassador—mixed party—Lord Glenbervie, Mr. Jackson, American minister, Sebright, Wilbraham Bootle, and others—little good done I fear. The Duke talked to me about accepting the chancellorship of the University."[25] Upon this subject he wrote to Mr. Simeon.

"Kensington Gore, March 16, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

I have been desired to canvass you for the Duke of Gloucester; and as our friendship is such as to justify our applying to each other on such an occasion, I cannot refuse to express the interest I take in his Highness's success. The Duke of Gloucester has been commonly active in promoting institutions of a benevolent kind, and more especially he has been incessant in his attentions to the interests of the African Institution, and to all which has tended to the benefit of the African race. I therefore must feel warmly interested for him. I am so pressed for time that I must suppress all that I should otherwise have to say to you. But you will give me credit for all that is affectionate, and believe me, now as ever, my dear sir,

Your sincere friend,

W. WILBERFORCE."

[25] Diary, Feb. 23.

In the midst of these employments he complains of "having suffered" his "mind to wander too much from subject to subject, without discussing any satisfactorily. Let me amend here. To addict myself to African matters, and North American Indians—cætera with a view to carrying through the others by gaining influence." Yet in spite of this resolution every day was loaded with so many claims, that he could not confine himself to these two subjects. Throughout the remainder of this busy session they were the leading thread in his intricate engagements, but throughout his Diary they are intertwined with a multitude of other useful efforts or benevolent designs. A few brief and unconnected extracts will give the truest picture of these multifarious engagements.

"March 16th. Pinkney, American minister, having appointed me between twelve and one, I was forced to town. Wished to see him before he is off, for Abolition' sake, and North American Indians. I grieve to say he intimated no hope of amicable adjustment. "22nd. To Penitentiary Committee. Examining Newman, keeper of Newgate—a sad place. 23rd. To Rose's to meet S., Sir R. E., Nepean, and Lord Selkirk, about withholding spirits from the North American Indians. The two first had professed themselves friends to us, but now drawing back. Sad work." Three days later he went on the same errand "to S.'s at Mark Lane, where met Sir R. E. and others. They all warmly against Lord Selkirk and me, who contended with them. How much I re-

member all this exactly as in the beginning of Abolition inquiries! Those concerned at first seemed favourable, but on reflection, like bodies moved from their bases, and toppling a little, they righted again; they thought better of it, and gave up to interest again; as, 'Other nations will take up the Slave Trade, &c. so now, the Americans will carry spirits in.' Again, 'do it *gradually*,' says Sir R. E. 29th. Off from breakfast for Penitentiary Committee, where Jeremy Bentham to be examined. He declined coming, and I went over, finding him at my lodgings, to fetch him. House till quarter-past eleven on Romilly's Bill; we carried it against ministry, 79 to 56. Sat. 30th. Off, after a few notes, to inquire about poor Blair, whose name I saw with two others ordered for execution. Saw Ryder, and heard from him what satisfied me that all idea of saving him hopeless, and even wrong. Still I thought I ought to do as I would be done by; I reflected that our Saviour would have looked thus after the culprit; and therefore, though it was much for me to give up the morning, I went on to Recorder's, and had perhaps an hour's talk with him, and a most interesting one it was. He showed me housebreakers' instruments, told me a thousand anecdotes, convinced me of what Marsden had said, that the London thief and the country thief were different characters. He told me such things as showed me plainly I had not been fairly dealt with, and that the man ought to suffer."[26] "Mr. Pinkney sent me a letter which was written to him by the President of the United

[26] Diary.

States, intimating a disposition to enter into negociation with England on Abolition Enforcement questions distinct from others; and Pinkney said that he had never had a convenient opportunity of reading it or showing it to Lord Wellesley, who was out of town all the summer, and he saw his Lordship rarely. This looks very ill. Lord! give peace to an afflicted world. 31st. Two sermons from F.; that in the morning on 'the persecution of the religious world,' I did not much relish.

"April 1st. A very hurried morning. Mr. Weatherell called before prayers, and breakfasted, and others. Very much — incessantly occupied till quarter-past twelve. Then called Lord Cardigan's and Aylesbury's per force. Then lodgings, and found an immensity of letters. Then House, calling committee for examining Bentham. Dined at lodgings—afterwards Wakefield railway, which sharply contested. I believe I carried many votes, though I declared truly that I was quite uncertain what course I should pursue after the committee. I was truly hurt to go against John Smyth, especially so soon after his father's death. Alas! it requires sterner stuff than I am made of, to carry on these matters well." [27]

These complaints he pours forth to his friend, Lord Muncaster.

"Near London, April 10, 1811.

"Alas! my dear Muncaster, how little your sanguine hopes of my being by this time at liberty,

[27] Diary, April 1.

are verified! To-day, as again to-morrow, I am doomed to that vile and hateful drudgery of presiding in a committee, where a private bill is very hotly contested; and what is worse, contested between those who are all my friends; and what is worst of all, the case is one in which it is really very difficult to form a clear judgment. Yet, notwithstanding this difficulty, you would suppose, from the warmth with which the partisans on each side abuse the other, that there was no room for any difference of opinion, but that dishonesty or sheer stupidity could alone cause any one to hesitate on which side to give his vote. I am now writing on the evening of Saturday the 13th of April, having every day since that on which I wrote the first five lines of my letter been incessantly engrossed, except on the day which of course was claimed by considerations and feelings peculiar to that season when we commemorate the event on which we depend for all our hopes of future happiness. Alas! I am beginning my recess with so great an arrear of business, that I am ready to burn my papers, and *shut up shop*.

"You surprise me by your account of the blooming state of your walls, though I was prepared to hear accounts which might seem strange to any one who did not know that the seasons with you are not such as your degree of latitude might lead any one to suppose. But, my dear Muncaster, though you have staid till all around you is so beautiful that you can scarcely persuade yourself to quit the loves of the castle; yet come you must, or I shall send the ser-

jeant-at-arms to disturb your privacy; and what is more, you must bring your daughters with you, or they also shall be summoned on some pretence or other to give evidence concerning the practicability of a tunnel through Scawfell to facilitate your communication with Winandermere. We abound with projects this session, and there are some little less extraordinary. I guess how you will rejoice in the late accounts from Portugal. They really gratify me more than any public news which I have heard for many years. Why, it is enough to drive Buonaparte mad. What! L'Enfant gaté flying before Lord Wellington?

"I must break off. Nil mihi rescribas, attamen ipse veni. With kind remembrances,

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"Bring the lasses."

None of this abundant crop of projects caused Mr. Wilberforce more trouble than Lord Sidmouth's abortive attempt to regulate the licences of protestant dissenting teachers. He disliked the whole measure, but feared especially lest, whilst aimed at others, it should cripple the pastoral instructions of the clergy. This fear he early expressed to Mr. Perceval; having, on the 26th March, "opened to him about the North American Indians — the Irish people and system, actual and proper—the English church—the clergy, and the operation of the Conventicle Act; with the

benefit derived from religious societies conducted with caution by the minister himself. I told Perceval these effects in Richardson's[28] case and others, and stated to him Richmond's diligence and its effects."[29] No private influence of the minister could divert Lord Sidmouth from his plan; and upon the 29th of April he proposed that the Peers should be summoned for its full consideration upon the 9th of May. At this stage of the business, Mr. Wilberforce felt bound to open some communication directly with Lord Sidmouth, "to whom" he "had abstained from writing, having kept out of his way until the last, just as I did in the case of Abolition, because I thought we were likely to agree about as ill on one as on the other. I was not indeed aware of the particulars of his Bill, but was against it on general grounds."[30] This interview took place upon the 1st of May, and was to be resumed upon the following Monday. Immediately after the first conversation he writes to Mr. Hey, who from his early connexion with the Methodist body, would enter into all the bearings of the question.

"Five o'clock, Wednesday, May 1.

"My dear Friend,

It quite grieves me to be able to send you but a very few hasty lines; but I am most unwilling to let the post depart without a few words to you, because I must hear from you on Monday next—do not disappoint me.

[28] Rev. William Richardson of York.

[29] Diary.

[30] Letter to James Stephen Esq.

"Lord Sidmouth states it as the chief ground of his measure, that the Conventicle and Toleration Acts are differently construed by the first lawyers, and the public, in different parts of England. He means to allow itinerancy; proposes that no man can have a licence, unless he previously produce a certificate of his moral character, from six reputable householders; and he thinks he may require a certificate of three members of the sect to which the individual belongs, stating that he is fit for the office of a teacher.

"We were interrupted, and he did not fully state his plan. But what I strenuously enforced on him was, that he must provide that members of the Church of England might meet together for devotional exercises, without being requested to declare themselves Dissenters. I own I fear, if he does not admit some such provision, numbers will be forced into the ranks of the Methodists. I am to see Lord Sidmouth again on Monday after the post comes in. I have been scribbling now in a room full of people, all talking about and to me, and fresh from a public meeting.—Farewell.

Yours ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"Lord Sidmouth told me," he writes to Mr. Stephen, "that he had a conference of an hour with Dr. A. Clarke the day before; and he seemed to think, and certainly would have made me believe if I had not been prevented by what I know of the

world, and of the parties, that he had satisfied the Methodists that his Bill was harmless as far as they were concerned. I was chiefly afraid lest he should stop the private religious meetings of the clergy; and I urged the danger of all who should come under serious impressions, going off in that case to the Methodists, and described the excellence of their discipline."

These fears were speedily dispelled by the total failure of the measure. The Methodists rose against it as one man; and on the motion for its second reading in the Lords, it was negatived without a division, and with the expressed concurrence of the Lord Primate and the government. Yet out of this business grew one of those irritating rumours which infest the course of the most simple-minded politician. "Have I told you," he asks Mr. Stephen, "that it is reported and credited, that Lord Sidmouth told the deputation that I had been of his cabinet, and had instigated him to the measure, and had been his counsellor; and that when Thompson[31] told me what Lord Sidmouth had said, I stamped upon the ground and wept, exclaiming, Then Lord Sidmouth has betrayed me—or as some accounts give it, that I was in an agony; but these agree in saying that I exclaimed, Lord Sidmouth has betrayed me? (You see that this implies the most consummate villany possible.) Yet this is believed of a man whom some of them, at least, must know to have defeated a similar

[31] Thomas Thompson Esq. M. P. for Wendover, a member of the Methodist body.

attack, only worse, in 1796 or 7,[32] and who has had nothing to do with the Methodists since, but their being such zealous friends to him in the contest of 1807. By the way, I have not mentioned to Thompson what I doubt about mentioning even to you, (on account of Matt. vi. 3,) but I will—as it bears on my real feelings about the Methodists, (though more about one of their founders,) that from respect to that great and good man, Charles Wesley, I many years ago prevailed on two friends to join in allowing his widow an annuity, which she still receives. I have often, I own, thought it a great reflection on the Methodists, that they suffered such a person to be in real want, as she was when I undertook her cause."

It is strange that such a report should have gained credit, but so it was; and he heard of "the Sidmouthian declaration to the Methodist deputation of my hostility to them," as "bruited about with natural comments and additions, at Kidderminster, Leeds, and many other places. Though he was by this time pretty well case-hardened, and accustomed to walk with truth "through evil as well as good repute," yet he felt at first "perhaps too much the personal injustice done" him, "just as a cut gives a sharper pain, than a heavy weight which overbears you."[33] Yet even then he was chiefly "hurt by this story, because it goes to disparage religion; and though its falsehood may be proved to sensible men, it will leave a cloud behind. Is it," he adds strikingly,[34] "that God, knowing me to be fond of popular favour, means

[32] In 1799. Vid. vol. ii. p. 365.

[33] Letter to James Stephen Esq. [34] Diary.

thus graciously to mortify the passion? At least let me try to derive from it this benefit. I ought however to vindicate myself by all fair means." With this view he "called on Butterworth, but finding that both he and Adam Clarke are in Ireland," he determined "to get them to write and contradict the report." Mr. Butterworth, who "was all kindness in the matter," immediately adopted this course; so did Mr. Thompson, Adam Clarke, and Dr. Coke. The last referred in his letter to "the influence you used with Mr. Pitt, in preventing that great and irresistible man from bringing into parliament his intended Bill, which would have destroyed itinerant preachers root and branch. Lord Sidmouth told me that to his knowledge, Mr. Pitt had prepared such a Bill, but that how it dropped he could not say." Lord Sidmouth "called and made every acknowledgment which a friend could desire;"[35] whilst in the following year he received a public vote of thanks from the Methodist body for his principles of toleration.

The progress meanwhile of the session brought no intermissions of his labours. "I must put on the harness again I fear on Thursday," he tells Mr. Stephen after two days' holidays in April, "but I shall require the whip to make me take the collar." "How little good I do, compared with what I might," was his secret lamentation! "Lord, I can only fly to Thee—my race is nearly run, but oh that I might do some spiritual good, and even still more, that my desire to do it might be simple."[36] This spirit was a never-failing stimulus to action, and his mornings

[35] Diary. [36] Ib.

may be described by the entry in his Diary of April 27th. "Spent nearly an hour in private devotions. At breakfast had a number of people—Mr. Guiness, of Dublin, about Irish brewery. Colonel Morison, from Trinidad, Smith's friend, very acute and pleasing, wishing for instruction of Black corps—shocking account of Trinidad. William Hoare, about Scilly missionaries. Had each alone, besides general breakfast. Lord Teignmouth too called. Then to town—letters —lodgings. To Exhibition dinner—looked at the pictures—blamed myself for looking at a Scriptural subject without emotion, as at a common fabulous picture. Dined—sat near Sir T. Bernard, Rose, and Bankes. Set down Rose at his house—he quite sure that he shall show the Bullion Report to be the most blundering ever laid before parliament. Surely the opposite opinions of men, able, honest, and experienced in the business, should teach diffidence in holding your own opinions, and candour in judging others. Lord Carrington, Perceval, and Vansittart, all dissevered by party; and Rose, Samuel Thornton, and Thomas Thompson against committee, whilst Henry Thornton, John Smith, and Bankes, most decidedly for the Report. Wasted twenty or twenty-five most precious morning minutes to-day; for time misapplied is wasted."

The House of Commons, which he attended closely all this session, ended most of these days, and often called him into active service. Thus at this time he "opposed, upon the Bullion Question, the depreciation of the currency"—"carried an address to the Prince

Regent for rewarding Captain Manby—sounded as to making adultery a criminal offence," and "took an active part in private business and committees."[37] Above all, he watched diligently over the Abolition cause," urging "Yorke, First Lord of the Admiralty, to send out ships of war to Africa, and clear the coast by a thorough sweep"—"acting in the committee for helping the Portuguese in order to strengthen influence with them for the sake of Abolition"—"supporting Mr. Barham's motion for the introducing free labour into the West Indies"—and "carrying triumphantly" an "amendment," upon the 13th of June,[38] by which the slaves in Trinidad were continued under the milder code of Spain.

In all this press of business he "feared lest" he should keep no watch over himself "on week days, and yet expect, as of course, to enjoy communion with God on Sundays. This will never do. I must watch unto prayer, or I shall never enjoy the light of God's countenance."[39] He "felt the comfort of early private devotions, so as to desire to have a full hour or more quiet," daily; and how far he maintained this watch, may be gathered from the grateful exclamation which soon afterwards bursts from him—"My Sundays are so precious to me in these weeks of bustle."[40] Nor did this hurry impair the naturally lively action of his domestic affections. "You have been much in my thoughts," he writes on Sunday evening, (June 23rd,) to Brighton, where

[37] Diary. [38] To Mr. Marryatt's motion.
[39] Diary. [40] Ib. May 19.

his wife and family were settled, "during this day; I do not feel at home, while you are absent, even in my own house. I shall not go on writing, as I hope so soon to see you, but take up my pen just to note down the pointings and tendencies of my mind.—I trust our minds are contemplating to-day the same objects, just as we look at the same heavenly luminaries, both by day and night." "You will judge," he writes again, on his return from a Sunday spent in Buckinghamshire whither business had carried him, "by your own feelings of the trial to which mine have been just exposed, by a blunder of my secretary. I approach my own house, I confess, with very different emotions from those which possess my mind when I expect to find you all in it; still I had been regaling myself with the idea of hearing from you, when on eagerly asking for my letters, I was told they had all been sent after me to Bledlow, and could not come to town again, at the soonest, before Wednesday. I confess that it was with very solitary feelings that I walked round the garden. It would however be shameful, if one so enveloped in blessings should be impatient under such a petty trial as this will appear even a month hence, though it excites too lively sensations at the moment. Bledlow is really one of the most completely rural parsonages my eyes ever beheld—a deep glen thickly furnished with trees and shrubs, and through which you hear a gurgling stream, is at the end of a little grass plot before the windows. I need not say that you were not forgotten in my musings; and I will acknowledge that I quite longed for some quiet country residence, in which,

after the bustle of our parliamentary life, we might have a little quiet Christian intercourse."

Such visions would force themselves upon his imagination; but many years of labour were still to be passed through before they were in any measure realized. A wish to testify in every way his gratitude for the Duke of Gloucester's steady Abolition zeal, led him to steal time for attending the Cambridge installation. "I came here," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce, from the Lodge at Queen's,[41] "about a quarter before twelve last night, and have been highly gratified by a selection of sacred music this morning. But Catalani, though you must admire her voice and execution, does not touch the heart. I have several letters to write in a short time, so I must not indulge in writing to you. I have written every day, though yesterday my letter was only like the soldier's watch-word, 'All's well.'—Farewell."

"Saturday, early to Trinity Lodge, to the Duke of Gloucester; then to Senate House, where Duke installed Chancellor—spoke well; installation ode good. Back to Trinity—dinner in the cloisters—grand affair—Dr. Parr smoking."[42] "We are in such a state of bustle here," he says on Saturday night,[43] "that it is a great effort to step aside for half an hour and write two or three letters, and I cannot do it without being scolded by our friend the Dean. How, with your love of quiet, you would abominate our goings-on, and indeed I am heartily tired of them! After a whole day of public work of one kind or another, I have been staying quietly in

[41] June 28. [42] Diary. [43] Letter to Mrs. Wilberforce.

my room instead of going to see the fire-works. How unlike," he continues upon Sunday evening, "is this Sunday to those to which I look forward with hope in the course of the summer! But I must break off unwillingly. Farewell. I trust nothing will prevent our meeting next week." This hope was disappointed. "I am so pulled in different directions," he says on his return to London, July 5th, "and on puzzling and vexatious questions, that I quite long for a little peace and quietness. Yet, alas! alas! in this state of feeling I am accosted with the unwelcome tidings of more business still in the House of Commons, which will come on upon Tuesday next, and not terminate till about the middle of the following week. I heard a distant hum of it yesterday, but I would not molest you with it till the sound became irresistibly clear. I am not yet able to judge whether or not I ought to attend, and if I can stay away with any just construction of my duty, I will gladly (oh how gladly!) join you. But I *must* have a good conscience; and I know you would not wish me to do wrong, however you may regret the sacrifices which may be necessary."

It was the 13th of July before he left London to join his family at Brighton, thinking that he need "not attend this second session on Lord King's Conduct Bill," and exceedingly disliking "the idea of making bank notes a legal tender." Yet a suspicion crossed his mind that he had left his proper post. "I could not be easy, and so returned to London on the 15th, and was in the House till nearly three o'clock." "I did not think it right," he tells Lord Muncaster, "to

continue so near the scene of action without being present, so I returned for the Bill occasioned by Lord King's extraordinary measure, and staid till it had passed. How much must it have astonished you to hear that Lord Stanhope was the man to step forward and prevent mischief. I must honestly own I by no means like the Bill we have been passing;[44] but when Lord King had not only been defended, but even applauded, in both Houses of parliament, believing as I do that such conduct would throw the whole kingdom into confusion, it was absolutely necessary to pass some law, if it was only to declare the sense of parliament."

"The King's health," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce, from London, "is not alarming, but he has had a bad relapse of his mental malady, and there seems little hope of his recovery. But the pain produced by this relapse is lost in the extreme concern I feel for the apparent probability of a war with America; may God avert it." In the closing debate of the session, on the 19th of July, he gave utterance to these feelings. "Deeply, sir, do I deplore the gloom which I see spreading over the western horizon; and I most earnestly trust that we are not to be involved in the misfortune of a new war, aggravated by possessing almost the character of civil strife—a war between two nations, who are children of the same family, and brothers in the same inheritance of common liberty." Upon the following day he joined his family at Herstmonceux.

[44] Making it unlawful to give more than twenty-one shillings for a guinea, or less than its legal value for a bank note.

CHAPTER XXV.

JULY 1811 TO JANUARY 1812.

Correspondence with Mr. Roberts—Doubts about resigning Yorkshire, or retiring from public life—West Indian persecutions—Pays visits in the country—John Bowdler—Alexander Knox—Lord Muncaster—Change of ministry expected—Cambridge Bible Society—Duke of Gloucester—Bishop of Bristol—Christmas in his family—William Allen—Lady Lindsay's marriage.

THE vacation opened with its usual employments. "Letters my chief business. Writing a long one to-day to Mr. Roberts, vindicating myself against Mr. W.'s charge, and against his own declaration, most kindly and frankly made, of my being too hurrying and immethodical, and thereby lessening my influence."[1]

Nothing could be more characteristic than the history of this correspondence. Mr. Roberts, with whom he had before no particular acquaintance, had called on him in the bustle of the session, by an appointment which had escaped Mr. Wilberforce's recollection. The rest may be told in his own words—"Wrote to Mr. Roberts, from whom I received a most frank and honest letter; too strongly charging me with deceiv-

[1] Diary, July.

ing people, though ascribing it to my attempting more business than I can execute. I love his frankness, and thanked him for it; yet how hardly am I used! If I do my utmost, yet if I do not succeed, or if delays happen, they are charged on me; yet I am not clear of the fault of taking more on me than I can get through, though not intentionally to blame. Of late years I have refused multitudes of things. Let this letter, and what it states of another person, who charged me with deceiving him, speaking fair, but performing nothing, though all this is false . . . yet let it be a lesson to me to avoid all appearance of evil."[2]

Mr. Roberts, though with no such intention, had taken the shortest road to his confidence. "A friend who will frankly tell me of my faults in private," was a possession that he valued above all price. "I must spend what time remains," he says two days afterwards in his private Journal, "in humiliation and prayer; but let me just put down the record of a most striking letter from Mr. Roberts of Sheffield—the most truly Christian, candid, kind, friendly remonstrance I ever remember; especially considering the erroneous views of my conduct under which he wrote. I had unhappily forgot an appointment made with him four days before; and just when raw and fresh from this instance of my negligence, he met at my door a neighbour, who charged me with the most gross misconduct, in making people dance attendance on me, and perhaps, at last, not only deceiv-

[2] Diary of June 7.

ing, but even opposing them, &c. Yet he had the firmness and Christian spirit of love to make him not credit this, and to ascribe what ground there was for it to my undertaking more than I could execute."[3]

"I should do violence to my own feelings," he tells Mr. Roberts, "if I did not without delay assure you solemnly, that I greatly respect your frankness on general grounds; but that still more on personal grounds I consider you as entitled to my warmest gratitude for what I must deem a signal act of friendship. Two of the best friends I have in the world, have endeared themselves to me in no small degree by the same friendly frankness. Amongst other advantages which follow from dealing thus openly, is this, that if a man be not in fault, or not in fault greatly, he has an opportunity of vindicating himself in whole or in part; or if he be in fault, he has the opportunity of acknowledging, and as far as possible of repairing it. * * One word for the person whom you met at my door; you will add to the obligations I owe you, if you will tell me who it is, or what the case is on which he applied to me. I can solemnly declare, that for many years I have been particularly on my guard never to excite expectations which I was not sure I could realize; but I must say public men are often used very hardly, and a person in my situation is made answerable for measures he cannot control. I will strictly observe any injunctions of secrecy under which you may lay me; but conscious that I have not meant to deceive, I

[3] Journal, Sunday, June 9. Two o'clock.

cannot but be very anxious to exculpate myself, if it be only in your opinion, which I must say I value highly from the specimen you have given me of your character."

Mr. Roberts's reply enabled him fully to refute this charge. "Another most kind and Christian letter," is his memorandum of it. "N. was the man who gave him that account of me. How curious! Never had any man more reason to complain of another than I of him; and because I kept back all my complaints, he goes about abusing me, and even such a man as Roberts is the dupe of his account. Yet I am not clear that it is not more stupidity than intentional roguery."[4] His correspondent's frankness deserved, he thought, a fuller explanation of the truth. "It is really extraordinary," he tells him in an early letter, "but I find myself opening to you with all the unreservedness of an old friend, and entering with the same confidence of friendly sympathy into my private circumstances and feelings. Frankness begets frankness. My temper is naturally, I believe, open, and you have been so kindly unreserved to me, that in return I open the window of my bosom, you will remember the allusion, as soon as with my mind's eye I see you ready to look into it."

As soon therefore as the leisure of his holidays allowed, he replied at length to Mr. Roberts, entering naturally into a detailed sketch of his whole life in parliament.

[4] Diary.

" Herstmonceux, near Battel, July 29, 1811

" My dear Sir,

The strong claim on my esteem and gratitude which you established by your first letter is much augmented and confirmed by your last. I speak the real sentiments of my heart, when I assure you that I feel deeply indebted to you. How much do I wish that you had been long ere now in the habit of occasionally addressing me in the same style of friendly, and I will add, Christian, animadversion, and also, when needed, of reproof! Such communications are unspeakably valuable to any public man, who wishes, on the one hand, to do his duty, and who, on the other, is sufficiently aware of the difficulty of his task, and of his own various imperfections.

" I am sorry I have not as much time at my command as I should be glad to employ in considering your letter, before I reply to it. But weeks might be spent, neither idly nor unprofitably, in discussing topics of such importance and extent. Before I enter on them, let me assure you, that your last letter, by informing me that it was N. to whom you had alluded, has afforded material relief to my mind. For, though I was conscious that I had never intentionally trifled with or deceived any one with whom I had business to transact, yet I was but too well convinced that from inadvertency or forgetfulness, arising from the multiplicity of my occupations and engagements, I had occasionally been justly culpable; (how could I be otherwise than impressed with the consciousness

of this, when engaged in writing to you, in whose case such a circumstance had arisen?) and I could not foresee into what extent of apparent criminality I might not have been drawn by the same causes. By informing me, that —— and —— were the person and case in question, you have therefore, I repeat it, considerably relieved me. * *

"I have spent so much time on the former part of your last letter, that the latter and more interesting part must be despatched more briefly; and I will be honest enough to begin by confessing that I wish I could vindicate myself as satisfactorily, even to my own judgment, against the general charge, which you urge so kindly, and therefore with increased force, of a want of order and method in the general discharge of my business, and I cannot deny the consequences which you ascribe to these imperfections. I strive, and will strive still more earnestly, against them. But let it not be supposed that after this frank confession, I am seeking covertly to do away the effect of it, when I go on to remark, that though conscience compels me to plead guilty to the indictment, there is much to be alleged in extenuation, much in explanation of my offence. And before I proceed to state these particulars, let me bar any conclusions in this case, to be drawn from the last session of parliament only; because the truth is, that about ten months ago I lost my secretary, and hence my papers have been in confusion, my letters have been unanswered, and I have been forced to spend time in writing with my own hand many which ought to have been writ-

ten by my secretary, with a gain to me of the time for better purposes.—But you will easily suggest to yourself, how such a cause must diffuse its effects throughout the whole of my day, and of my work. In the next place I ought perhaps to mention my not having any great share of bodily strength, were it not that though this prevents my being able occasionally to work double tides, and so get through a great quantity of work in a few days on any emergency, yet my constitution has been such as to enable me, I believe, to get through on the whole as much business during six or seven months as many far stronger persons: the inability to bear great fatigue does however sometimes cause my affairs, papers, letters, &c. to fall into confusion, because I cannot, after having been kept up till four or five in the morning, rise at my usual hour, and pass my time according to its ordinary system of allotments. Conscious also of this, I dare not make engagements for an early or even moderate hour in the ensuing morning, because I cannot foresee how long I may be kept up on the preceding night. This leads me to remark in the next place, that in the case of a member of parliament, it is not merely the quantity of work which he has on his hands, but the uncertain hours he must keep, which prevents his having the full command of his time.

"And now in going on with this explanation, I find myself embarrassed by the fear of subjecting myself to the imputation of vanity and self-sufficiency, if I proceed to state particulars, which it would yet be

unjust to myself to forbear mentioning. But if the great apostle of the Gentiles, when his character was called in question, felt that he was justified in speaking of his own actings and sufferings in the cause of Christ, in a manner which but for the occasion would have rendered him liable to the charge of boasting and vain glory, I may surely, at least to your friendly ear, state concerning myself particulars which, but for the circumstance which calls them from me, ought not to proceed from my own pen. With this excuse then let me state to you, that there is scarcely any member of parliament who has much, or I might almost say any private business, who attends the discussions on public questions with any thing like the same degree of regularity as myself, or who takes part so much in them. Again, there is scarcely any such member who is so generally put on the public committees, which from time to time are appointed for the despatch of important business, for conducting delicate and important inquiries, &c. Observe, I do not put myself on these committees, but bearing in mind that I am member for Yorkshire, I own I think it right that I should be present at the agitation of all public questions of moment, and for the same reason, that I should not shrink from the attendance on committees. The number of these to which I belonged during the last session was very great. Let me also state that you can scarcely conceive the prodigious amount of inconvenience which I sustain from not thinking it right to allow my servants to say, when I am within, that I am not at home, but only

that I am engaged. . . . I will just state, that my scrupulousness here is not on my own account so much as on my servants'; it has been a matter of so much importance to me, as to have made me observe the effect on their minds of saying, Not at home; and I see that nine out of ten of them conceive that they are telling a falsehood for their master's convenience. How then can I afterwards speak in Scriptural terms of the guilt of lying? and will they not be likely to infer, that if they are allowed to stretch a little when it is for their master's benefit, they may do the same for their own? . . . But the inconvenience which I suffer from it is extreme. For my servants assure me, that in spite of all they can say, of my being engaged, of my not seeing persons unless they come by appointment, (Yorkshire men however are excepted from this rule,) people will force their way in, and then you may conceive the consequence. Indeed I believe you have in some degree witnessed it; I say in some degree, because I doubt whether I had the pleasure of seeing you at Kensington Gore, and if not, you can little conceive how difficult it often is for me to force my way out of my own house. But though I own I might do better, and hope to do better than I have done, the above causes, with the additional circumstance of the grand evil of all, my very great correspondence, render it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to allot certain hours to certain occupations, in the degree which you perhaps suppose. There is however still another consideration to take into the account, and a consideration of as much prac-

tical importance and operation as any that has been mentioned, and that is, my not being a party man,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,

which surely the member for Yorkshire ought not to be; for as I have no such easy principle to decide my vote, in nine cases out of ten at least, as that of the side of the House from which the motion proceeds, but profess to take my part on every question according to my own unbiassed judgment, much reading is necessary, much reflection, much talking matters over with able and impartial friends, when facts are brought forward, concessions made, &c. which do not appear in public debates. The questions on which we have to decide are often, believe me, of great nicety; on which, if a man will give a fair hearing to all that is to be urged on both sides, he will own it is very hard to judge which of the two scales preponderates. I must add, by the way, that you are not to estimate the attention I pay, nay the share I take, in public debates and conversations, by what you see in the newspapers; for belonging to no party, I am naturally, as well as on other accounts, very unpopular with the reporters, who are always strong on one side or the other. Hence I am often left entirely out, and more frequently dismissed with a much shorter account of what I have said, than is given of what comes from other speakers. . . . The evil of which I am here speaking, if it affected myself only, would scarcely deserve to be noticed; but considered in its general operation, as it tends to aggravate party violence, to produce a disposition to cultivate

the favour of the reporters, instances of which I have seen in men who might have been supposed incapable of such servility, to destroy in short all independence of principle and character,—viewed in these and other consequences, the evils arising from the partial and unfair way in which our debates are now reported, and more especially in which any neutral, particularly if he is supposed to be unreasonably religious, is treated, are of the very first importance, and tend as I really fear to the ruin of our country.

" But I have been led away, though not unnaturally, into this general discussion. I will finish this train of egotisms, of which I really am heartily ashamed, by stating that my irregularity does not proceed from my having less time to give to parliamentary business from social engagements, domestic comforts, other occupations, &c. for I make all other business bend and give way to that of parliament. I refuse all invitations for days on which the House sits. I commonly attend all the debate, instead of going away after the private business is over for two or three hours, and coming down again after a comfortable dinner; on the contrary, I snatch a hasty meal, as I may, before the public business begins, in the short interval sometimes between the end of the private and the beginning of the public. I see little or nothing of my family during the session of parliament, (though, blessed be God, of a more tender, excellent wife no man ever received ' the gift from the Lord,' you know the quotation,) and I have staid till the very end of the session, I believe, every year of the

last twenty-three or twenty-four. This very year, I had gone down to my family, when the new business which so unexpectedly sprung up gave a call, to which I did not turn a deaf ear. Now, my dear sir, once more I assure you, I am ashamed of myself for running on thus; and yet having said so much I will close the account by stating, in enumerating the commendable parts of my parliamentary character as well as confessing my infirmities, first, that though I am conscious that I have so much to do that it is not well done, (and let me inform you that for the last two or three years I have declined all new business, wherever I could do it with a good conscience,) yet that whenever there has been any special demand for my services, I have not I trust been wanting to the occasion. In the long business of the Woollen Manufacture Committee, I drew up the Report (this if you please entre nous); and when during its continuance the question of the Iron Tax came on, I can truly say I bestowed on it all the time and thought which it justly claimed, and I believe, though again I hate to speak thus, the part I took had a material effect in deciding the fate of the measure.

"But that which I account the part of my public conduct in which I have acted the most faithfully by my constituents, and in a manner the most becoming the member for the first county in England, is my not having rendered the situation the means of benefitting my relatives . . of whom I have had several with large families reduced from great affluence to entire destitution by commercial misfortunes . . or

connexions, or friends; nor still more, the means of aggrandizing myself, or my family, or rather, which was the greater temptation to me, of securing a quiet seat in the legislature of my country, exempt from expense, trouble, or risk, and which would have allowed me to attend as much or as little as I liked without impropriety. This, I dare say, has never struck you; but when you consider on the one hand, that more than half of the present House of Lords has been created or gifted with their titles (excluding all hereditary descent) since I came into parliament, and on the other, that my intimacy with Mr. Pitt for so many years may be supposed to have rendered it not difficult for me to obtain such an elevation, you may assign more weight to this circumstance, than at first sight might appear to you to be due to it. I remember Mr. Cobbett commenting on this subject with his usual fairness observed, that my pride was more gratified by being M. P. for Yorkshire, than by receiving a peerage from any minister; and I will not deny all force to the remark; but I can assure him, that this pride would never have had the effect of preventing my accepting a seat in the House of Lords —they were principles of a very different and far higher order which produced that operation.

"And thus for the first, and let me hope for the last time, finding myself in a rural retirement at a friend's house, where I could scribble on with little interruption, I have suffered myself by your friendly expostulation to be drawn into this exposure of the real sentiments of my heart, respecting my parliamentary

conduct. But after all I have been led into saying in my own favour, I ought in fairness to add, that I am myself conscious of many, many imperfections, and defects, and errors; of more perhaps than are known by any other person; though I can truly declare that they have not been caused by my sacrificing a sense of public duty to my own personal advantage, or, I will add, personal gratification. I will also confess my fear lest from the infirmities of age beginning to appear, (for though I am not quite fifty-two, a man's age is not to be always measured by the number of his years,) there have been more imperfections within the last year or two than formerly—the memory first declines, and in my intercourse with you there was a notable instance of its being defective. Let me not forget to assure you that I consider myself, in all that I have been saying, not so much defending myself against the accusation you brought against me, as against that which I brought against myself—that to which I was conscious I must appear justly subject in the judgment of fair and unprejudiced observers. I should not however, though I have been so insensibly drawn on into pouring forth the unrestrained effusions of my heart as they have flowed forth without preparation or arrangement, I should not, I think, send off such a mass of egotisms, (as I must again style what I have been writing,) if the friendly frankness with which you addressed me, had not made me feel that I could open to you the whole interior of my mind. Once more I thank you from the bottom of my soul for the friendly and

Christian freedom which you have exercised toward me.

"The postman is come. He departs hence, most inconveniently for me, at a very early hour; and to save a day I will send off this letter without reading it over;—it will at least show, that I wish to stand well in your estimation,—you have in fact convinced me, that you form your judgment of men with an observing, and at the same time a candid, eye. But after all, it is of little real importance what judgment is formed of us by our fellow-creatures. To obtain the approbation of the man within the breast, as conscience has been well called, should be our object, and to seek for that true honour which cometh from God. Believe me with real esteem and regard, my dear sir,

Your obliged and faithful,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The alarming illness of the King called him at this time to an immediate decision upon a most important question, suggested to him by that consciousness of failing memory which he expresses in this letter, as well as by the earnest advice of some of his most confidential friends. "I am thinking just now whether or not to give up the county of York: it is a most serious question, may God direct me right in it. I can truly say, that if I knew which was the right path, I would follow it."[5] A little later he says, (upon the 24th,) "My birth-day again—born in 1759, so fifty-two complete. I had wished to spend it in re-

[5] Diary, Aug. 1.

ligious exercises, but I cannot. I have some very urgent African and other business; but I am going to spend an hour or two in religious exercises—self-examination, humiliation, &c."[6] "And oh let me not omit the duty of praise and thanksgiving! Who was ever so loudly called on to perform it! Who has been so highly favoured! Surely when I look over in detail for the last forty years (Deut. viii. 2) the course of my heart and life; when I call to mind what I have been, and what God has done for me, and by me; when I sum up all together, and recollect that consideration which should never be forgotten, that all the past, present, and to come, are under the view of God in lively colours, I am lost in astonishment, and can only exclaim 'Thy ways are not as our ways, nor Thy thoughts as our thoughts.' I will try to look back through my past life, and to affect my heart, as by the review it ought to be, with humiliation, gratitude, love, and confidence, mixed with reverential fear; and oh I must adopt the words of Ezek. xvi. 63, 'That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee' (poor old Newton's story) 'for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.'"[7]

"I wished to devote to-day specially to the important purpose of seeking God's direction on the question, whether or not I should resign Yorkshire; and if so, whether to come in for a small borough. I have not time now to record the arguments in full particularity.

[6] Diary. [7] Journal.

Babington and Stephen are clearly for my giving up the county, on the ground that neither my body nor mind are equal to the pressure which it must bring upon me. The reasons for retiring from Yorkshire are chiefly,

"1. The state of my family—my eldest son just turned thirteen, and three other boys, and two girls. Now though I should commit the learning of my boys to others, yet the moral part of education should be greatly carried on by myself. They claim a father's heart, eye, and voice, and friendly intercourse. Now so long as I am M. P. for Yorkshire, it will, I fear, be impossible for me to give my heart and time to the work as I ought, unless I become a negligent M. P. such as does not become our great county. I even doubt whether I ought not to quit public life altogether, on the ground that if I remain in the House even for Bramber, which Lord Calthorpe kindly offers, I shall still be so much of a political man, that the work of education will not be set to heartily. This consideration of education is, in great measure, the turning point with me; but,

"2. The state of my body and mind, especially the latter, intimate to me the solve senescentem,—particularly my memory, of the failure of which I find decisive proofs continually. At present I can retire incolumi famâ, and that is much. (See Johnson's last Rambler but one.)

"But there are some other considerations. I do not believe there would be any serious contest, and am not prompted to retire by the fear of being turned

out, so that I may leave out altogether this class of considerations. But if there should be any contest, the Sidmouth and Methodist story would be circulated with all the scandalous exaggerations and calumnies which the evil spirit could stir up, and people hostile to religion, and suspecting all religious persons of hypocrisy, would believe it; and the credit of true religion might with my own be tarnished. It weighs with me too that the services to religion, both in the House and out of it, which I might render if I were to stay in parliament, might perhaps be rendered by persons not labouring under the stigma of Methodism. My most faithful friend William Smith (oh how I wish he were even as we in the most important particulars!) could do what was needful, and so could others.

"I must go to devotional exercises, but I will just add that when I look into my own heart, and realize the scene before me, I cannot deny that I feel very deeply the loss of my high situation, and being out of the dramatis personæ whilst all my friends are acting their parts; but so far as this is vain-glory it is to be resisted to the very utmost. To serve God is the true honour of those who are not their own, but are bought with a price; and the point is, to learn what His will is. It is unspeakably comfortable to me to have Babington, Stephen, and other friends, confirming my own view as far as relinquishing Yorkshire goes. Then I may humbly hope to be enabled by God to discharge my parental duties better, if I strive to prepare my heart for fulfilling them, seeking

His blessed aid, and 'cutting off the right hand' which would prevent my performing a father's duties. I trust God will strengthen my mind, and smooth my path, and vouchsafe to prosper my labours and endeavours with my children. If my line of duty be a humble one, shall I not gladly pursue it, if I see reason to believe it is the path to which the Almighty directs me?"[8] A few days after this he visited "the Speaker" and "talked over the projects with him. He against both—most of all against quitting the House altogether—of Stephen's opinion as to the effect of occasional attendance."[9]

His great humility disposed him, as has been already said, to defer too much to the judgment of his friends; yet this was more perhaps in appearance than in truth. It led him indeed to seek their counsel with unusual freedom, and to weigh it with proportionate anxiety, and thus sometimes gave to a suspended judgment the appearance of a want of resolution; but on all important points he at last acted on his own convictions. Yet whilst forming his own judgment he was often "much embarrassed by the conflicting advice of friends—Babington strong for absolute retiring—Stephen and others for giving up Yorkshire—but Grant and Henry Thornton against my quitting the county."[10] This fulness of discussion makes his letters an accurate picture of his mind; for to his intimate friends he opened himself with a freedom which corresponded with his warm affections.

[8] Diary and Journal, Aug. 24.
[9] Diary, Aug. 26. [10] Ib. Aug. 24.

"You are and ever have been kind to me," he tells Mr. Stephen, "beyond a brother's kindness, and I think of it often with wonder as well as with humiliation and gratitude. Indeed I have long thought, that of all the manifold blessings which Providence has heaped on me, the greatest of this world (and indeed it is not to be so restricted) consists of kind and intelligent friends, whom He has raised up for my comfort and benefit. Surely no man ever had so many, and you and my sister are amongst the very first."

His letters, whilst this question was before him, abound in these incidental illustrations of his character. He replies to Mr. Stephen, who rested his advice that he should resign the county chiefly on the manifest effect of over-work upon his weakly frame—

"My dear Stephen,

Many thanks for your letter—like all your conduct towards me, exhibiting marks of the most tender affection and sincere friendship. On the whole I own I am at present disposed to see the same scale preponderate, though not quite for the same reasons. The education of my children is a powerful motive with me for declining the county. And yet I am but too conscious of being very ill qualified for the office of a mentor at present; but I hope by taking pains I might become better fitted for the work. I have no idea of teaching them their learning, but I feel deeply the importance of endeavouring to cultivate their friendship and intimacy, and of striving to regulate their minds and tempers. Yet I shrink

with awe from the idea of at once giving up for life all the efficiency for religious and humane purposes, (the former weigh with me ninety-nine parts in a hundred,) which would arise from my continuing in the House of Commons. The idea therefore of such a seat in parliament as that you speak of is a great ease to me. For when I think of sealing up as it were my parliamentary account and having done, as I now am, such a pang of conscience is produced!!! I seem to have been so unprofitable a servant compared with what I might have been. But I must break off.

Yours ever affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. I have always thought that it would be an instance of conduct truly Christian, suited to our times, for a man to retire voluntarily from such a situation as mine without a peerage, &c. You reckon little of this, of which I think very much. Farewell. May God bless you and yours."

"I am not sure," he writes to Mr. Hey, "whether or not I ever intimated to you, that for some time past I have had it under consideration whether at the next election it would not be advisable for me to take my leave of our great county, with many, and I am sure unfeigned, acknowledgments of the kindness which I have so long experienced at its hands. I was not however aware of its not being likely to live out its ordinary period of existence, but calculated on the

contrary supposition. Neither had I at all made up my mind to retire in 1813, the year when it would have attained its date of six years. I always intended to consult two or three friends, and after furnishing them with all the data I could supply, to be in a considerable degree guided by their advice. But the present state of our venerable Sovereign gives us but too much cause to fear that another election will come on very soon, perhaps almost immediately. I am therefore forced without delay to make up my mind one way or the other. * * *
I incline to retire at least from the representation of our great county, if not from parliament altogether. I begin to feel the effects of time, both on my bodily and mental powers; and my family is growing up, and claims far more attention than I can give it, while I devote as much of my time to public duties as the situation of M. P. for Yorkshire appears to me to require. I have always thought it right, while in that honourable station, to be a constant attendant, not, as is too common, to make the House of Commons my amusement, and perhaps go out of town for weeks together while business is going on.

"I must however check my disposition to run on.—There are many services which I should not be so well able to render if I were out of parliament; but I trust God will raise up others to defend the cause of religion at home and abroad, at least to oppose downright persecution; and this is a line of service in which many persons who have themselves no respect for religion will engage, and in which they may be even

the more able to plead the cause with success, from not being liable to the imputation of enthusiasm."

With Mr. Babington he debated the matter at more length. "I humbly trust," he says, "that if I knew which of the two courses it was right for me to pursue, I should not hesitate a moment about it; but when I consider what it is to relinquish voluntarily such a situation as that of member for Yorkshire in times like these, and I must add, without there appearing any person coming forward to occupy my place so far as espousing the cause of religion goes, I own I shudder at the thought. When I number up the considerations for retiring, I own they are very powerful. But then it is like closing my account, and I seem to have done so little, and there seem some things which it would be so desirable to try to do before I quit parliament, that I shrink from retiring as from extinction. There is however an alternative to be considered, that I mean of coming in for some other place. If I were M. P. for any small place, I should profess to attend only so far as my health and the education of my children would allow. Grant suggests that I could only exercise a general superintendence over them if out of parliament, and this I may do as eques calceatus.

"I see some objections to accepting Lord Calthorpe's offer, yet the opposing opinions of Grant, Henry Thornton, and Bowdler, who are all decided and strong against my resigning the county, make me more disposed than I was to embrace it as a half measure—the resource it is said of weak, but sometimes also of conscientious minds. It has weight with me, that at

the beginning of the Prince's reign I might have a considerable share of influence, and that it would be right to see how things go on a little, before I retire. I must also own that I fear, if I were now to retire, that all the grace of the surrender might be done away by the idea that I attempted to make a virtue of necessity, and made a pretence of retiring when in truth I thought I should be turned out. If it were only the momentary eclat, this would not be worth mentioning, but it appears to me to be a consideration of no small moment when you take into account that to let the principle of a Christian's really balancing how he may be most usefully and properly employed, how, all things considered, it was the will of God that he should determine the remainder of his life, without being biassed by a great worldly situation—this, and the quietly retiring to a private life instead of a peerage, does seem an action, which if right to do at all, it is right to do in such a manner and at such a time that it may not be misconstrued." Mr. Babington's reply turned chiefly upon Mr. Wilberforce's application of the word "extinction" to his retirement from the House of Commons, and it drew forth this beautiful rejoinder.

"Herstmonceux, Aug. 22, 1811.

"My dear Babington,

You know I sometimes speak strongly, and should not have drawn so large an inference from my word 'extinction.' I need not, I trust, assure you that I endeavour to bear in mind the conclusion of

Milton's beautiful sonnet, 'They also serve who only stand and wait.' But I am well aware it is not to stand still or even wait, to be employed in writing a religious work or to be educating six children. They are both employments which may well claim the utmost powers of a man of far greater abilities than myself. Still take into account, but do not be biassed by my supposed feelings—do not practise on me Solon's old excuse, 'As good laws, not as I could have made, but as they were capable of receiving;' but tell me fairly what you judge best for me. After this premising I say again, take into account that if I retire altogether from parliament and then return to it, I should be discredited; whereas if I should come in for any snug place on the alleged ground of intended relaxed attendance, such as might be compatible with the claims of my health and family, I might at any time give up the seat in the middle of a session, even just as easily as at the end of a parliament. And may it not be deemed natural, that a man who has been so long in public life, especially when a dissolution has come upon him two years sooner than he expected, should have matters to wind up so as to make his not at once going off altogether the more natural course. Yet whilst I write thus, I fear lest being in the House, and meaning to attend only upon great occasions, I should still be more of a political man (Βουλῆφορος ἀνηρ) than would be compatible with a diligent and cordial discharge of the duties of education and of writing.

"Besides religious writing, when once I should have

quitted the stage, I might, if I should deem it expedient, give even political counsel with a freedom which would not be tolerated in an M. P. I should speak as from the shades. I have in my mind certain truths as to the effects of the influence of the Crown—asking favours both in the House and out of it—concerning party too, and other things. Still, e contra, it is much to give up the hope of using the influence derived from having been long in public life for religious purposes. At this moment I have three applications depending concerning the poor slaves, and the missionaries—Trinidad, Demerara, and the Cape—(the last is a horrid business; the boors have actually murdered numbers of the poor Hottentots); but then I am bound in fairness to reply to myself, that the service here in question might be rendered by William Smith, Whitbread, and others, even better than by me; and I think it would not be difficult to get persons to undertake such commissions. The account to-day of the King's health is such as to force me to decide as soon as possible. Write to me immediately. Kindest remembrances.

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. Consider, my dear Babington, I have been in parliament thirty-one years, and how all my habits, &c."

This important question was far from occupying all his time. He complains indeed of being robbed of his

usual holiday leisure for literary enjoyment, and being able therefore to do little more than "run over part of Gil Blas, in the afternoon and evening, when nothing more serious could be well done. It is useful for me to know these works, and I do not find them fascinate me as many talk; but how completely unchristian are they! Besides this, I have run through four-fifths of Captain Pasley's book, the Quarterly and British Reviews, a little Cecil, and am reading Isaiah with Lowth—a little poetry to the ladies at night, and sometimes Walter Scott and Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son."[11]

But of more serious work, as he tells Mr. Babington, his hands were full; and in no vacation did he find, "as Dr. Johnson phrases it, a more plentiful lack of time."[12] Nothing stirred his spirit more than instances of that petty but grinding persecution, which breaks forth here and there, and lays hold commonly upon some simple, zealous man as its victim. More than one such instance was now before him, and he was always the redresser of their wrongs. "You really amaze me," he replies to the statement of one of these cases, "by your coolness. Used as I am in public life to hear of acts of injustice and oppression, and therefore though I may be supposed to have been disciplined into habitual sobriety of feelings, if not into absolute torpor, the account of this poor young man's treatment has called forth the most indignant emotions. G.'s dry, repulsive tone to the son of a deceased fellow-soldier is insufferable. How

[11] Diary, Sept. 1. [12] Letter to J. Stephen Esq.

forcibly does such an instance as this impress one with the real moral worth of that unparalleled sentence, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' I mention it because I have really found it useful in restoring me to some measure of Christian pity for these unchristian persecutors. I am not for giving up the cause without a struggle. But much more am I clear that a strenuous effort ought to be made, to prevent such scandalous, such horrible conduct in future. I could not hope for a blessing, (how can ministry or our country?) if I were not to use any share however small of power, which such an individual as I may have in counteracting such proceedings; and I think some considerations may be urged which will be likely to affect even irreligious men, much more any man who has any fear of God, and any sense of His overruling Providence."

The Cape, and above all, the West Indies, supplied the other subjects of his care. "You are not aware," he tells Mr. Hey,[13] "of all the claims on my time and thoughts which the West Indies have lately furnished." "We are working," says Mr. Stephen,[14] "like negroes for the negroes of Berbice, Sierra Leone, Trinidad, and Africa at large. Oh for a little farming and reading near Bledlow Ridge!" The reluctant conviction that their work was incomplete, was being forced upon the Abolition leaders. The West Indians clung too fondly to the vices of the old system; and though perhaps Mr. Wilberforce himself did not as yet look forward to those great attempts

[13] Aug. 22. [14] Aug. 21.

to which he was led on step by step by the gradual progress of events, yet the present vigilance and zeal of the protector of the negro were undoubtedly preparing for them.

His present object was to stop the "persecution of the missionaries, or rather the forbidding religion to the slaves in Trinidad and Demerara."[15] For this purpose he appealed earnestly to Lord Liverpool, pointing out to him that it was "a cause interesting not merely to the members of the particular sect to which the missionaries belong, though the Methodists are a very numerous and increasing body; but all religionists will make it their own. All will feel it deeply who believe in the truths of Christianity, and are capable of sympathizing with the injuries and sufferings of their fellow-creatures. In truth there is a peculiar call on our sensibility in the present instance, for in proportion as the lot of the slaves is hard in this world, we ought to rejoice in every opportunity of bringing them under the influence of principles which may cheer them under their present sufferings, and secure for them a rich compensation of reversionary happiness. Their case needs only to be known to produce the most lively sympathy amongst all good men from one end of the kingdom to the other, together with the most determined efforts to assert what may without impropriety be termed the *rights* even of the slaves. For it may be proper to remark, that there is in this case no question between the Methodists and the Established

[15] Diary, Sept. 6.

Church. The persecutors of Trinidad cannot hold out even that excuse—justly suspicious as it is when no other mark of zeal has been exhibited. There are in Trinidad no clergy of the Church of England. It must be admitted in Jamaica indeed that a very small proportion of the slaves can possibly have access to the few churches of that large island, or derive any other benefit from its scanty establishment. But in Trinidad I shall be glad to hear that there is any parochial church establishment at all. There is no Church of England clergyman in the island, unless I am misinformed, except one military chaplain attached to the garrison; nor have I heard of any provision for introducing the Established Church. I know not whether any of the popish clergy are there, but if not, and the remark is of the first importance, it is only through the missionaries that the slaves can receive any religious instruction whatever. To silence them therefore is to bar out and close up the only passage through which the light of Divine truth might be conveyed to that deeply-injured class of our fellow-creatures. It is not therefore the injustice and cruelty towards the missionaries of which I would complain, (though they are great and flagrant,) so much as the injustice and cruelty towards the slaves, in whose case this puts the finishing hand to the long catalogue of their wrongs."

There were many difficulties besetting this application; some of them may be gathered from a letter written to him at this time by Mr. Stephen. "I was consoling myself that we had a strong

game to play. I reckoned on the ardent support of all the religious world. But 'I have espied dissension and strife in the city.' I thought that I had put every thing in train with the Missionary Society and Methodists. I had repressed C.'s egotism and vanity from spoiling the representation to Lord Liverpool. I had parried an attack to know if *we* would support the repeal of the Conventicle Act. I hoped I had succeeded; that an application from the Committee of the Methodists, coupled with that from the Missionary Society, would back your representation, and extort a speedy and favourable decision. But last night I thought all was lost. C. had sent the case to Lord Liverpool, as from himself, without consulting the Committee. I fear this weak old man will spoil much of our hopes from the influence of that powerful body. It should teach us candour to find that —— with his low secular principles is not singular in wishing to exalt himself by means of a sacred cause, and even at its expense. If government does not yield to these private instances, we shall have a difficult and painful duty to discharge. But I think there is no alternative in conscience or in prudential regard to the welfare of our general cause. Think of this. Consider what is to be done practically and in detail. It is high time to have a plan for the campaign, and to be forming our magazines, mustering our forces, and recruiting our battalions. Without a cry from the public we cannot hope for success in parliament if ministers are not with us, or, what will be as bad, if they suffer themselves to be

placed in circumstances which will make the sins of the assembly and governors their own. Yet how is a cry to be raised without the help of the disaffected, or of men who will take widely different ground from what you and I could decorously or even conscientiously defend? I am full of perplexities and alarm. May God be with us, and direct and help us.

Yours, my dear Wilberforce,
ever very affectionately,

J. STEPHEN."

"I have received," replies Mr. Wilberforce, "a very friendly letter from C. about his application to Lord Liverpool; it is all however in the first person singular, and he did not seem to know that I had been at all applying. Certainly they have been too easily satisfied, and we must try to obtain better principled terms. It is curious how a little civility of language or manner from a great man softens them, and even makes them give up material points. If they submit cheerfully to a regulation that the planter's consent must be signified in order to justify preaching to any blacks.. this *must* never be acquiesced in." "You must have heard from R——," he tells Mr. Macaulay at the same time, "of the misconduct of the Governor of Surinam. Now R—— has it from a confidential source, and cannot in honour use it, except in the manner which they who related it to him would approve. Surely we might get the thing by the tail through some other channel, and if so we might easily drag it to light. Can you also furnish

me with any special facts or statements for Mr. Yorke? I can only say in general that there is much Slave-trading, much masquerading as Stephen terms it; but I am puzzled how to describe to Yorke what ships I wish ours to seize."

He was now again at Kensington Gore, having spent a day at Kidbrook, ("where most kindly received by the Speaker and Mrs. Abbot. Speaker asked me what Commentary on the New Testament I recommended. I answered, Doddridge's Expositor, mentioning Warburton's eulogium. Yet Doddridge is not satisfactory—Scott will not do—we want such a work."[16]) He reached home upon the 6th of September, and felt his "mind affected by having all around me on my first return home, but somewhat turmoiled from the consciousness of the number of people I had to see and things to do."[17] Here he spent a busy fortnight, pressing forward by continued personal exertion his West Indian efforts, and consulting with his natural advisers on his own doubtful question. He was gradually adopting his ultimate decision. "It seems best to quit the larger sphere, and yet remain at least for a while in parliament, at the beginning of a new reign, when one knows not what may be intended in favour of popery, or against morals." "I think I am pretty well resolved against Yorkshire, which I humbly hope is pleasing to God. I am sure it is not from the love of ease or quiet. I feel exquisitely the giving up all my old ways and habits, and still more, I humbly hope, the becoming

[16] Diary, Aug. 29. [17] Ib.

unable to render any public services such as those in which I now am engaged. Still God can find instruments. He seems to have prepared a new employment and new pleasures for me, and I humbly hope that I shall also know Him better and love Him more. O Lord, bless, and keep, and guide me!

"I am much impressed with finding my memory more decayed than I had conceived. When at Herstmonceux, I wrote several letters on important subjects to Lord Liverpool, Wellesley, and others, and I find the traces fading away. I cannot even be quite sure whether or not I wrote to Lord Mulgrave on the Feversham gunpowder-mills working on Sunday, or only intended to do so. This is surely a strong argument for retiring. Ne peccet ad extremum. I may forget engagements, declarations, and things which I have said, &c. and even bring a taint on my moral character. This weighs more with me than all the rest, and it ought so to do, lest I bring disgrace on my Christian profession. Lord, guide me aright."[18] "It is the very nature of all declinings to be at first faint, and even doubtful in their appearances. My old illustration of the tide slowly advancing, and then retiring to advance a little further and a little further, till at length it has gained its full ascent, is the best instance and illustration that I can furnish in this case, as well as in that in which I have more commonly employed it, the moral and religious change of the popular mind of a great nation."[19] "Oh how the heart is wheel within wheel!

[18] Diary, Sept. 6. [19] Letter to Thomas Babington Esq.

I cannot help continual risings of the feeling, what an impression would the knowledge of these thoughts make on others, and then when I check this, what of these checkings, and so ad infinitum."[20] Meanwhile he was full of business, "several important matters having been stored up to meet me. Several missionary concerns. With Lord Liverpool, Lord N. and others. Heard with pleasure from Lord N. that justice would be secured for the Hottentots. He bore strong testimony to the effects of the Moravian missions—less to those of the Methodists—said Vanderkemp and Kichener worthy men, but enthusiasts. Alas! poor Lord N., how little dost thou judge according to the Scripture's estimate! Was not then St. Paul an enthusiast?"

There was no mark of failing vigour in the efforts he was now conducting; and he was followed into Warwickshire, whither, on the 20th, he removed his family, by the grateful tidings of their entire success. These busy days moreover had been days of friendship.

"I shall think during my absence from England," wrote Mr. John Bowdler just before he again sailed for Sicily, "with peculiar pleasure of the few days passed at Kensington Gore. It was a sort of connecting link between the scenes of past happiness to which my mind often reverts, and those which are yet but images in the land of hope and futurity. Æneas amused himself (when he was much busier than I am) with watching the shades of his expected progeny, and hearing what wonderful things they were to perform on earth.

[20] Journal, Sept. 6.

Why may not I amuse and solace the moments of languor by visions as innocent at least, and, if not associated with the hopes of worldly grandeur, connected with those dispositions and affections which are best fitted to brighten and tranquillize this life and prepare us for a better?"

The next two months were spent by Mr. Wilberforce in paying, with his family, some long-promised visits. Signs of thankfulness to God, and love to man, mark every halt along his route. "Elmdon, Sunday, Sept. 29. Walked a little with Cowper—the beautiful end of the 6th book—'the promised Sabbath.' What a prospect! Oh the unspeakable mercies of God; what can I desire which He has not granted me? And then when I compare my state with that of all the rest of the world, in other countries, and even in this little oasis of security, and prosperity, and peace! Oh that I were more grateful! Oh let me strive more to love God and Christ, to delight in Them, and be grateful to Them in some proportion to what I ought." "Oct. 28th. Off for Lord G.'s, where very kindly received. It is a fine place, and improved with great taste. Their kind compulsion kept us over another day. Lord G. very pleasing and friendly, but these fine houses do not suit me. Surely they see too little of their children. Alas! I fear I did little good. Resolved to take opportunity from a conversation we had at N. to write to Lord G. to press on him the reading of St. Paul's writings. Oh may the effect be blessed! He is of a sweet disposition, and most superior understanding. Alas! how

unspeakable are his disadvantages, and how much does he suffer from high life! How thankful should I be for having a wife who is not of the fashionable sort! How thankful for my not having been made a peer in earlier life! It would, humanly speaking, have been the ruin of my children, if not of myself." "Mr. S. and E. added to our party. S. harmless, but dull. E. a shrewd, clever man of the world, moralized down by marriage into a good magistrate and very decent man, especially when with decent people. I was not careful enough to introduce edifying or useful topics." "Finishing in the evening a letter of Alexander Knox's, of fine imagination, rich in thought and beautiful in language; ingenious too, and devotional, but yet fanciful, and full of guesses and subtleties leading to dangerous practical errors, or rather perhaps arising out of them, and then lending their filial support."[21]

During this excursion, he took his family to visit his old haunts under the hospitable roof of his "host and hostess of the forest;" and from Yoxall Lodge he writes to Mr. Macaulay.

"Yoxall Lodge, Nov. 12, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

Many thanks for your kind letter. First let me say a word of R. and then dismiss him . . I must begin by expressing my concern at giving you so much trouble: I really do not say this speechificandi causâ . . Would he make me a good secretary? He corresponds in one grand particular with the ab-

[21] Diary.

stract idea I used to form of the person likely to suit me; he has been buffeted about in the storms of life, and would know the value and comfort of getting into a port, snug and peaceful, with wood and water in plenty, if not abounding in all the luxuries of life.

"But to turn to Goree and Sierra Leone.... Here I was interrupted—even a forest you see has its callers. ... I resume my pen in great haste and pressed for time. We are all greatly scandalized at seeing the advertisement of Scott's Final Perseverance Sermon staring people in the face on the outside cover of the last Christian Observer, next adjacent to the advertisement of his Reply to the Bishop of Lincoln. Seriously it is very unfortunate—that is too strong a word, but it is to be regretted; and the recollection of some former advertisements leads me to ask whether some little check could not be provided against such impressions? I am ashamed to name the very words Christian Observer; but really you would have had a paper from me, but for my being obliged to write all my letters myself. Farewell.

Believe me ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

To Lord Muncaster, whose daughter was soon to be married to Lord Lindsay, he writes a few days later.

"Voxall Lodge, Nov. 20, 1811.

"My dear Muncaster,

I am quite disappointed. Hearing that the Bishop of Llandaff had promised to cross the moun-

tains to officiate on a certain occasion, I conceived that I should ere now have seen in the newspaper a report of the formation of that lasting union, which our grandiloquous friend had undertaken to cement. I am tired of waiting to congratulate you, and therefore I take up my pen. * * * *

"These qualities are in truth indispensable to the true happiness of the married life. A couple may agree to be civil to each other before spectators, they may act the part of husband and wife, but there will not be that identity of interests and feelings which constitutes the very essence, the vital spirit, of the union. It is a favourite opinion of mine, which I should be glad to call my own, but which I think I have seen in some great author, that to the institution of marriage, as it exists in all countries where Christianity prevails, is to be ascribed that superiority which is so marked in the European over the Asiatic natives. The consciousness on both sides that the union is to be for life, produces effects in various ways which are almost incalculable. It is here as in other of the works and dispensations of the Almighty; at first sight we observe something to admire and love, but the more closely we inspect, the more thoroughly we examine, so much the more cause do we find for love and admiration. The direct reverse this to what we experience in the works of human art, where a closer examination always brings to our view defects, if not deformities.

"So all our rumours of dissolution have died away, and we old folks—a parliament of four years' antiquity

—are to meet again upon the 7th of January! As usual you have heard more politics, at least more party intelligence, than I have. I had anticipated your account in one point; and had fully expected that the Prince would try to make a broad-bottomed administration by taking in others besides Lord Grenville—

"You do not mention, perhaps you have not heard, that T. has been obliged to sell his lovely place, beautified extremely by himself, and of which they are passionately fond. His losses have been occasioned, I am told, by the mismanagement of a partner. He bears it admirably, and such blows are the most difficult to bear of all the strokes of Providence. How unspeakable is the consolation derived in such a season from the persuasion that the event has not happened by chance, and that it may be rendered the means of ultimate benefit! I cannot help thinking that in this I see the hand of God. It will lead him to clear away the rubbish and cleave to the foundation; his spiritual sun, which the fogs and vapours of worldly bustle obscured, will shine out at the close of his natural day. In truth, my dear friend, we are all too apt to forget that the time is short, and that the fashion of this world passeth away; that here we are but strangers and pilgrims. Farewell, my dear Muncaster. I will not apologize for the serious strain into which I have just given. I know you wish me to say what is uppermost, to pour forth the effusions of the heart. Farewell once more, and may God bless you. When that is said seriously, as I say it,

well may it be added in the phrase of the Orientals, What can I say more?

I am ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

By the end of November he was again at home. He found the political world talking "of a change of ministers, and the Morning Chronicle pushing hard for the Grenville and opposition parties—giving the Prince strong hints."[22] But soon afterwards[23] he describes the "opposition as very angry and distrustful of the Prince Regent, though they affect to hold that, bound as he is by the ties of honour, it is impossible for him to retain Perceval. Prince's health said to be bad—he is very nervous. It is reported that he is insane, and many well-informed people seem half to suspect it. Sir W. Scott looked significantly at Stephen, and said, 'He certainly has done no business for some time.'"

A few extracts from letters written at this time to Mr. Simeon exhibit some of those secret links by which all through his long public life he was connected with the efforts of religious men in every quarter. Mr. Simeon was anxious to set up at Cambridge an Association of the Bible Society, and he at once appealed to Mr. Wilberforce for help. In his first reply he merely promises "to do his best." The next day he writes at greater length—

[22] Diary, Nov. 29. [23] Ib. Dec. 13.

"Dec. 6, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

* * * * * The Dean judges on the whole that his attending the meeting as it now appears would do more harm by lessening his influence on other occasions on which it might be useful to the cause of religion, than good by the gain in this particular instance. I do not concur with him in this opinion. Still however I believe the Dean would attend, if you could name to him almost any respectable people who would be present. Cannot you do this? Would not the Earl of Bristol attend? He is a nobleman of the most respectable sort, and I believe his name is still on the boards. Could you not procure an application to be made to him, and confirm his disposition to attend, by stating the need that there is of the higher order as general officers to lead on the legion of rank and file which I trust will flock to your standard? The Dean would be quite decided if the Bishop of Bristol would attend. He is afraid of appearing the head of a number of under-graduates, and being thought thereby to encourage insubordination. I am sorry the Duke of Gloucester is out of town. As nothing can be done—rebus sic stantibus—you should desire Lord Hardwicke to prevail on some other grandees to be present. The last address from the Bible Society quite inflames the heart. Farewell —may God bless you.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The day following he wrote again.

"Near London, Dec. 7, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

I am sorry to be the messenger of bad tidings, but I have no good ones to transmit. I found by sending to the Duke of Gloucester's residence that he was expected in town last night, and I resolved to effect an interview with him this morning. Accordingly I sallied forth, and was with him some time; but I am sorry to say, that not only is his going down out of the question, but that I fear he will not even write a letter approving of the scheme, for which I pressed, when I found no more could be obtained. * * * I shall however continue to do my best; but alas, that best is very little; however, 'it is in my heart.'

Believe me ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Another post brought a more favourable bulletin.

"Near London, Dec. 10, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

Io triumphe! or rather let me more properly praise God for the greatly altered view of things. When all my prospects were dark and gloomy, behold the light suddenly breaks forth. Who should be announced to me this morning, but the Duke of Gloucester, who with a cheerful countenance accosted me by saying, that he had come himself to let me know

that though on the whole he still thought it would not be proper for him to attend in person, he had written to desire that it might be stated to the meeting that he highly approved of it, and took a lively interest in the Society's success; that he desired to be put down as a subscriber of 50 guineas; and that if there should be a request made to him to become President or Patron of the Society, he should not decline the situation. The Duke suggested, that if the Bishop of Bristol, from delicacy toward his brother of Ely, should not like to attend, Lord Hardwicke would be the fittest person to represent and speak for him at the meeting. The Dean has not absolutely decided, but I think he will go. I press him to go down as strongly as with propriety I can.

"With kind remembrances to common friends,

Believe me ever most sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The day following the meeting, its success was thus communicated to him.

"Trinity Lodge, Dec. 13, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

Were I ever inclined to think lightly of the character and merits of the British and Foreign Bible Society, your opinion of it would convince me that I could not be wrong in lending my humble assistance to that which has deserved the support of the friend of every thing which is right, humane, and good. Unfortunately, for reasons I will explain when

we meet, I could not attend the meeting. But our great and admirable friend, the Dean of Carlisle, who is himself instar omnium, did; and there exercised his extraordinary powers to the credit of himself and the furtherance of this most important cause, which I have the happiness to say was well planted, and is likely to be most thriving. I have the honour to be, with the sincerest regard, my dear sir,

Yours most obediently,

W. Bristol."

The Christmas holidays had now brought his two school-boys home, and all his six children were gathered round him—"A true family party," but "how sadly do I feel my own exceeding incompetency to the work of education! O Lord, to Thee do I flee. Thou hast promised wisdom to them that ask it sincerely; grant it then to me, that I may be kind and cheerful, and yet steady with my young ones."[24] He was at this time labouring under a distressing oppression on the chest which for some weeks almost deprived him of his voice. "The visitation under which I am now labouring is, like all providential dispensations towards me, very mild, though so serious in its effects; my voice much affected to-day."[25] Yet was he striving to make their home cheerful to his children. "It is of great importance to preserve boys' affections, and prevent their thinking home a dull place."[26] "R.'s birth-day, so they had their play of

[24] Journal, Dec. 15. [25] Ib. 22. [26] Diary.

King and Queen in my court dresses—in the evening chess. Evening, air-pump, and Southey's Curse of Kehama—imagination wild as the winds—prodigious command of language, and the moral purity truly sublime—the finest ideas all taken from the Scriptures."[27] "Oh what a consideration is it, that magnificent as are the visions of glory in which Southey's fancy revels, and which his creative genius forms, they are all beneath the simple reality of the Christian's hope, if he be but duly impressed with it! May the eyes of my understanding be enlightened, that I may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of His glorious inheritance. Amen."[28] "Hearing Thalaba again—I admire its moral sublimity; but surely it is a most false impression that it conveys of Mahomedanism, and the measure is most unreasonably harassing, and the music often destroyed." "23rd. Being still afraid of talking, sent the two eldest boys to Mr. Venn's on a visit, hoping to join them on Thursday."[29] Two days afterwards he writes to Mr. Venn.

TO THE REV. JOHN VENN, CLAPHAM.

"Kensington Gore, Christmas-day, 1811.

"My dear Friend,

Though I thank God I am better, and though Dr. Baillie gives me reason to believe there is nothing alarming to life or health in my complaint, yet as it is

[27] Diary. [28] Journal, Dec. 22. [29] Diary.

very serious to me in its effects, especially just now when parliament is about to meet, I believe I should do wrong in going to you this week; since I must either be nearly silent or must talk to my injury. As I know I should be with those who would be kindly disposed to put the best construction on all my conduct, perhaps I should not dread the being thought by your young ones to be a very dull, because so silent, a fellow; and I can truly say, I should wish with you to hear rather than to speak; but still I distrust myself and my own powers of taciturnity under a strong temptation to talking, and therefore Q. E. D.

"I had fully intended to send for the boys to-morrow if I should not go to you myself; but considering that to-day is a day on which probably there is no exercise for the turning machine, I have an idea, if perfectly convenient and advisable, of sending for them on Friday, probably between two and three o'clock. I really long for them to-day, as I beg you will tell them.

"But I have a secondary reason for their staying till Friday, which is, that perhaps your son may then accompany them. Mr. Allen, the lecturer, is to dine with me at four on Saturday next, in order to show my family afterwards some experiments—philosophical and chemical, and I dare say it will be a pleasure to your son to be of the party; and on Saturday morning he could accompany them to the Liverpool Museum, or to see Mr. Parker's glass manufactory, or something of the kind. I could get Allen no other day, or I would, in hopes of your coming too. I will treat

Henry on Sunday, indeed always, as my own child—and I am with kind regards,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. I hope the boys behave quite well, and desire my kindest remembrances to them and to all your family."

On Saturday "William Allen the Quaker dined with us by three; and soon after dinner, till half-past eight, showed us galvanic and chemical wonders." "How truly edifying," he continues in that tone of hearty praise which sprung ever readily from his habitual humility, "to see such a man's goings-on! Though so attached to science, in a large business, and so busy at Lancaster's schools, lecturing at Guy's publicly—he attends all charitable meetings where needed, and assigned as a reason why he could not attend us on Monday, that he must be at the meeting for distributing soup at Spital Fields from six to nine. Thus can he contract into the smallest dimensions, or expand into the largest, for beneficent purposes." [30]

The year closes with a letter of congratulation to his early friend at Muncaster.

"Near London, Dec. 31, 1811.

"My dear Muncaster,

It does indeed give me pleasure to witness the solid satisfaction with which you can contemplate the

[30] Diary, Dec. 28.

connexion which your daughter has formed; and I heartily wish, and indeed hope, that it may be a growing pleasure, which will subside into a less tumultuous, but not a less solid and permanent, because a calmer joy. At this season, when it is usual for friends to interchange good wishes, accept of mine, and be assured of our kind sympathy in all that concerns your happiness both here and hereafter, and that of those who are most dear to you.

"You will be sorry to hear that for above a fortnight I have had a complaint which still continues, though I trust it is better, of a nature not alarming as to life, but very serious in its consequences to any one in my situation. It affects my voice; and Baillie, whom I have consulted, advises inter alia my resting it as much as I can. This is a very difficult regimen —the regimen I mean of silence, to the head of a large family, especially now that my young ones are at home. Shall we not see you on the 7th? I scarcely conceive that, in the present state of parties, the opposition will divide against the Address. But we shall very soon get, as you truly say, into difficult and complicated states of men and things, in which your statesmen by profession will find it no easy matter to shape their course. But Perceval has so good a bottom of firm integrity, that I trust he will never find his vessel drive from its anchor. I think of him in many respects as I plainly see you do, only that your youthful fire still causes you to think, and feel, and speak, more glowingly than such a colder personage as myself.

"I must break off. I begin to fear I shall not be able to attend the House at first. With kind remembrances to Lady Lindsay, if still at the Castle,

I am ever, my dear Muncaster,

yours affectionately and sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

END OF VOL. III.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.

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